

# Social Media: A Commandery Dilemma

by **Sir Knight Michael Blair**

We live in some truly amazing times. Social media is transforming communications in ways that were unimaginable just a couple of decades ago. We often read about the accelerating pace of innovation, but nowhere is this more pronounced than in the world of communications.

With the onset of the Internet and the birth of social media sites, we in Masonry have a number of challenges before us. How can we engage these new media types? Should we love or hate them? Can they play a role in our organization? How can we use the social platform to improve our fraternity, membership, and communication? All these are great questions and should be openly discussed.

Can you image back in the early 1900s, how would you have communicated with your members, perhaps by a letter or even a telegram? The telephone was introduced, and it changed the way people communicated. Can you imagine the discussions that must have taken place in thousands of lodges around the world when someone suggested that we call and tell people that we were having a meeting? Let us not forget email; do you remember the concerns about emailing? We have seen amazing times in Masonry and in the Commandery. Change is not only a concern, it is an inevitable fact of the times we live in. I propose that we embrace the change and never be afraid of the light. The average United States internet user spends thirty-two hours online every month. The average Facebook user spends an average of seven and three quarters hours per month on Facebook; scary or exciting potential? Yes, it is easier to turn a blind eye to the reality that younger Masons and Knights use these daily, but we are not a fraternity for the weak of heart or spirit; we are the shapers and molders of the clay of man, so pick up this new working tool and engage yourself with it.

The average Facebook user has one hundred thirty friends. Just think about this. Have you shown the light of Masonry to all your friends? Seventy-seven percent of Facebook users interact with brands and groups using the site. As we move forward, we will be able to communicate more easily with the larger audience of our craft. Twitter has more than one hundred million users and Facebook has over nine hundred one million.

First, let us take a second and define what social media is and is not. Social media is communication between like-minded people in an online space. This is a good generalization of what social media is and how it allows people to communicate, discuss, and learn about a specific topic. Social media is not a sales platform as it applies to Commandery and Masonry. It is not a networking tool to cheapen the fraternity or diminish us in any way. With sixty-two percent of adults worldwide now using social media, it really is a way to communicate more, quicker, and easier with everyone. Yes, someone could join your group that is not a Mason or Sir Knight, but is that really a bad thing? If we offer something they want to know more about, is that not what brought us to the altar of Freemasonry? Yes, it does make us more public and available to anyone,

but again, so what! Our ideals, history, teaching, and fellowship are what we offer, and it is good and true.

Social media and your Commandery is not only the main idea of this article, it is the future of how we will communicate with our members. The fact that most of us are carrying a smartphone with access to a number of social media platforms is a great opportunity to improve our communication not only with our Sir Knights but with any Sir Knight that might want to know about your asylum's activities.

The lesson we can learn from social media is that people want to share, collaborate, and engage with other Sir Knights using this new media. Social media is where many younger Sir Knights are turning to get the latest information, so I implore you all to be open to the possibility that if membership is our problem, maybe we should look at how we communicate and engage our members. Social media is not just for FarmVille anymore.

### **Editor's Note**

For you vintage Sir Knights like me, FarmVille is a farming simulation social network game invented in 2009 and was once the most popular game on Facebook. I had to look it up. Where? - on the internet of course. The Ed.

### **End Notes**

1. Source: Adage.com
2. Source: <http://thesocialskinny.com/99-new-social-media-stats-for-2012/>

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