



Regional Fraternity of Eastern Canada

Leadership Bulletin #3

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Towards Collaborative Leadership

It is true that leaders are expected to lead. However effective leaders do not try to do everything by themselves. There is an art to effective leadership: it consists of successfully engaging others. This style of leadership could be called facilitative or collaborative leadership. The result of such a leadership approach is that the more others in the fraternity are engaged, the stronger the fraternity becomes. **Accordingly, the focus of this bulletin is the leadership skill of COLLABORATION.**

What we wish to explore within this bulletin is first, what constitutes effective collaboration. Second, we wish to highlight the ways that collaboration can be put into action within a fraternity and between fraternities.

A. Within a Fraternity

All members of a local fraternity Council, by virtue of their elected position on Council are in a leadership role. However, their leadership role is primarily a shared and collective one. The members of a fraternity Council ultimately have shared responsibilities and from that perspective are called to make shared decisions. Accordingly, **a spirit of collaboration** needs to be facilitated. And all members of Council need to mutually adopt this objective.

Fundamentally, collaboration calls for not only listening to the opinions of others, but to actively calling forth their ideas and suggestions. In this way, genuine dialogue is at the heart of collaboration. (Note: Dialogue is more than discussion; it is an open process where ideas are mutually exchanged and, as a result, participants often come to a new and enhanced understanding.) Together, because of an open and robust dialogue, improved fraternal initiatives and decisions can result. Ideally, the spirit of collaboration fostered within a fraternity Council, is also adopted at the fraternity monthly meetings. Such an approach, in turn, can empower individual members to become more engaged and thereby build a stronger fraternal sense of community.

This may sound simplistic, but it really is not. Effective collaboration can be a challenge, requiring extra effort to achieve. But the potential end results make the effort worth it.

Before moving on to the next section regarding collaboration between fraternities, it may be helpful to say a word about consensus. Collaboration does not necessarily entail decision-making by consensus. Collaboration may foster the development of common or mutually compatible ideas but does not demand full agreement. (Note: You may not totally agree with this clarification and that is OK. Nevertheless, we wanted to ensure that you were aware of our interpretation.)

B. Between Fraternities

The reality is that several of the fraternities in our Region are small in number. Consequently, there is much benefit for smaller fraternities collaborating with each other or participating in activities sponsored by larger fraternities. The underlying message is that we can be stronger together!

Unfortunately, collaborating with other fraternities is not always seen as a priority. It seems we can become focused within our own fraternities. To some extent that is understandable. But leadership at times, calls us to look beyond the “boundaries” of our own fraternity and recognize the collaborative potential of engaging with other fraternities. The result might be that individual fraternities become strengthened because of their mutual engagement.

Collaboration among fraternities is not a totally new idea. What is being suggested is already well known, especially in the Quebec Area of our Region. In the vicinity of Montreal there are many joint efforts (e.g. Day of Recollection, Communion Breakfast, Feast Day of the Portiuncula) that are celebrated each year, with ample participants from several different fraternities. These spiritual events are an excellent example of how collaboration can work to the benefit of many (small and large) fraternities simultaneously. Therefore, within the Region of Eastern Canada, we wish to encourage the adoption of this leadership skill of collaboration.

Here are a few words from our workshop facilitator, Paul Donovan:

Leadership in a Christian context has never been a solitary act. We are, of course, called to lead, to take initiative, to chart direction, to act decisively when needed. But the deepest mark of effective leadership is not control but communion. It is the art of engaging others, of drawing forth the gifts of the whole fraternity so that the mission becomes shared rather than pursued alone. Collaborative leadership is a way of being/acting together that mirrors the life of the Trinity – a life of relationship, of listening, of mutual self-giving.

Within a fraternity, this means leadership that listens before speaking, calls forth the wisdom of others before acting, and that measures success not by the speed of decision-making but by the depth of shared ownership and responsibility. True collaboration requires patience. It asks us to slow down, to make room for dialogue – not merely discussion or debate but the honest exchange in which each person’s insight becomes part of a greater whole. This kind of dialogue doesn’t always end in consensus, but it does lead to communion. And in that communion, decisions are shaped by grace rather than ego, by discernment rather than personal preference.

Between fraternities, collaboration takes on an even broader benefit. No fraternity is complete on its own, each carries gifts/talents that others need. When smaller fraternities join with larger ones – sharing prayer, service and celebration – together they form a visible sign of the unity we profess. These shared gatherings remind us that leadership is not about protecting boundaries but about building bridges. In a world marked by isolation and division, the willingness to collaborate is indeed a witness – a small but significant act of fraternity that strengthens all partners.

So as we lead, let us remember, that to collaborate is not to relinquish leadership, but to fulfil it! It is to lead in the way Christ leads – not from above, but among, inviting others to share in the work and the joy of building together a more inclusive and fraternal world.

A Wonderful Sign in the Sky: A Useful Symbol of Collaboration

At this time of the year, the sky can be resplendent with Canadian geese flying south, especially if we live in certain flyway zones. As they do so, it is intriguing how they collaborate, to help each other conserve energy and make easier progress moving forward. The iconic v-formation aids each member of the flock by assisting the one immediately following, by reducing air resistance and providing additional lift. And when the lead member of a skein tires, another bird in the flock comes forward to take the lead for awhile. Clearly, they have learned to fly together, efficiently and effectively. **What do you think? Within fraternity could we borrow this strategy and learn to work better together and get to where we want to go with further mutual effort and assistance?**

On behalf of the Council of the Regional Fraternity, we wish you and your fraternity “peace and all good” in your leadership roles. Please know that your leadership efforts on behalf of your fraternity are very much appreciated!

Warm Regards,
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Image by Manfred Antraias Zimmer from Pixabay