

Taking Our Council to a Higher Level

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We are here today to share our experience over the past 15 months in changing the culture of our Council which led us to be able to take our Council to a higher level. These actions add up to become the change in culture that got us to where we are today.

Our approach was not based upon rocket science but a strong commitment to elevate the Council Program and in so doing re-ignite the flame that made our current membership want to become a Knight of Columbus. We hope that in hearing us today that each of you will benefit from some of the information we will be sharing and hope that during the course of this weekend you will share with us and the other Knights here your experiences so that we can all leave here on Sunday with more tools and ideas to make our Councils stronger and more successful.

About 15 months ago we were sitting at an officers meeting. Art asked why we do not get more than 18 to 20 members to a business meeting. The old adage that 20% is a realistic amount for any group to get to a meeting was not sitting real well with us. We knew that we were being looked upon as the next Grand Knight and Deputy Grand Knight. That evening we discussed some of the potential reasons why attendance might be low with the most logical being the program. We then asked our Financial Secretary for a membership list and when the list was passed around we both realized that we did not even know the majority of the names on the list. In a separate conversation we decided that if we were going to be the leaders of our Council we wanted to know what it would take to get our 99 Brother Knights enthused and active in our

Programs. We decided that the best way to understand what was on people's minds was to do a survey.

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We sent out two different surveys: one to active members and one to members that we had not seen in many months, if ever.

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In our Active Member Survey we explained that we were reviewing the framework of our program and that a “Successful Knights of Columbus Program is more than words. It is more than a suggestion at a meeting. A Program needs people taking an initial idea, modifying it to suit specific situations and local needs, then implementing the program in a way that works.” Our intention is to enhance our program so that we can achieve greater satisfaction for our members and accomplish more in our service areas. We then listed the Seven Program Area's with five to eight activities under each and asked them to specify their areas of interest.

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We then asked them to tell us what ideas they had to make our Council stronger. And finally we asked if they would attend a dinner/planning meeting in the weeks ahead.

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To our inactive members we included all of the above but added to the reason for the Survey; “Most importantly we want to help you rekindle the flame that made you a member of the Knights of Columbus.”

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In addition we added a section that gave them the opportunity to explain their reasons for non-participation:

Were they work related issues? Would a different night of the week work better?

Was the current program of activities of interest?

Have other members made an effort to interact with you?

Other reasons – Please explain:

We received 44 surveys back out of the 99 we sent out. Most people would think that 44% was a good return rate but we knew that if we wanted to achieve the goals we had set for ourselves and the Council we needed to do more. We then took the 55 non-respondents, split them between the two of us and called each one. While we received good feedback via the Survey Returns we received even better input via the phone calls as people understood we were serious about what we were trying to accomplish as we had taken the time to call them.

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Between the Survey and the Phone Calls we heard lots of Goods, Bads and Uglys. Here is a list of some of the more important comments we received:

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1. Not enough service to Church and community.

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2. Communication needs to improve.

(Slide 8 – Click #1)

3. The monthly meetings have no life in them and I think most members dread them.

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4. When I attended my first meeting I really didn't know anyone in the Council. No one came over to introduce themselves to me and when the meeting was over I felt like a real outcast. I never came to another meeting.

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5. "I felt as though I had my arm twisted to join the Knights with some guy I hardly knew coming up to me with a membership form and asking me to join. I thought I was coming to the Church to find out more information about joining and it turned out to be the First Degree Exemplification Ceremony. Because of this I have never attended a meeting."

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6. We need to have social time with our Brother Knights and with our wives.

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7. We need to recruit members of all ages and give them a reason to stay involved. Having served as the Recruitment Chair for the past

year I have seen 4 new Knights join the Council. When we have an event there are 3 or 4 new members joining with 18 other Knights to do the work. This indicates that there are 80 Knights who do virtually nothing to contribute to the Knights of Columbus mission.

We put together a list of corrective actions that needed to occur in order to “Change the Culture” and take our Council to a higher level. We introduced this information at a Special Dinner/Planning Meeting that we held in June. We only had 37 Knights in attendance. But we had just experienced our first success – we had only been getting 18 to 20 to a regular Council Business Meeting and here we almost doubled that number. At the Special Dinner/Planning Meeting not only did we review the messages we received from the Survey and the phone calls but we also gave them the opportunity to voice any other issues that they had. When we finished the issue part of our meeting we then moved on to how we were going to change our Program based on the input we received. Our new Council Program was going to be built utilizing the Surge...with Service as our Program Roadmap.

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Utilizing the Surge... with Service as our Roadmap we would have Seven Directors. These Directors would be appointed by the Grand Knight and the Deputy Grand Knight & Program Director.

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The Directors would then hold separate meetings with all the Knights that had expressed interest in their specific Program area. Together they would discuss and decide what activities we would do during the Council Year.

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In order to be able to arm them with the information they would need, having come from a lack luster program in the year just being completed, we furnished each member with an abbreviated 35 page copy of the Surge... with Service. This tool gives many great things to do as a Council but more importantly foster's idea's for additional Program Activities. Utilizing the Surge...with Service we would then be able to formulate the various committees' we needed based upon the survey and telephone input we had received.

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From that listing we would solicit committee chairs and build the Council Organization Chart.

(Slide 12 – Click #1 & #2)

From the activities that came about at these Seven Program Meetings we would then build the Council Calendar for the Year. Once we completed the Calendar, we would begin working on the Council's full year budget.

At the conclusion of the evening we realized the following:

1. We had more Knights present than at any other function in recent history.
2. The attitude at the conclusion of the meeting was pretty upbeat.
3. We realized we had set some pretty lofty goals and that it would take effort and commitment on the part of the Officers and Directors to make it all happen.

We put our plan into action. We met with the seven men that we wanted for our Directors. We walked them through our thoughts as to their job description. We wanted to make it very clear that in order for our plan to succeed we wanted to share the work load, the fun, and the feeling of accomplishment. We would use the committee method as described in the Surge...with Service and we wanted Director's and Chairman to delegate – not to be a one man band. Equipped with their abbreviated Surge...with Service and their list of interested Knights, derived from the Survey and phone calls, they set out and developed their program during August with their team. Art and I were in attendance at each of the seven meetings to show our commitment to the Council Program.

When the Director's had finished their Planning Meetings and come up with the suggested Activities for the Year we sat down as an Officers & Directors Group in late August (for the first time in Council History we had Seven Directors) and analyzed each component of the Program to insure that we were addressing the Survey and Phone Call issues.

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The items we discussed and put into place were:

1. An increase in Community Service Activities – giving primary focus to Coats for Kids and Wheelchair Sunday.

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2. An increase in Church Activities - working with our Pastor we planned several Rosaries', an Altar Server Recognition Breakfast, and a "Keep Christ in Christmas" Tree lighting.

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3. As part of our Plan to improve Communications we did the following:
 - a. We developed a phone tree that was divided among the thirteen officers.
 - b. For every major activity we would send out an email reminder.
 - c. We developed our first Council Newsletter.
 - d. We built and installed our Council Bulletin Board where we posted both the current month and next month's Calendars.
 - e. At each business meeting we handed out the current month and the next two months Calendars.
 - f. We built a Council Website and kept it updated with information and pictures of events.

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4. We felt we needed to do Membership Candidate Information Meetings. In this way we would never be in a situation where ever again someone would say that they did not know what they were getting themselves into when they became a member of our Council. Rather than pushing a Form 100 in front of someone we decided we would use a softer approach – that being an invitation that we would send in the mail to the husband and the

wife to come to a Candidate Information Meeting at the Church, either in the evening or between our two Sunday Masses. At this meeting we would have some wives of Knights in attendance to make the Candidates wives feel more comfortable. After some social time together, wine and cheese in the evening and coffee and Danish in the mornings, we would then spend 30 to 40 minutes talking about the Knights Internationally including the Insurance aspect and then locally about what our own Council does. We then would give them the opportunity to ask questions.

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5. We then reviewed how we treat new members remembering the input from the Survey.
 - a. We determined that at least three to four officers would be at door to the Parish dining room where we hold our meetings to welcome people at the door.
 - b. We then planned to assign Mentors to each new member.
 - i. The new members would meet their Mentor at the First Degree Exemplification.
 - ii. The role of the Mentor was to become that first new Knights friend.
 - iii. To introduce them to Council members before the meeting as well as during the Social Time after the meeting.
 - iv. To sit with the new Knight at the meeting and answer questions about Parliamentary procedure, and the activities that we were planning.
 - v. Mentor's, in addition to the Officers Phone Tree, would call them with a reminder of the meeting or for the first

couple of activities and have them work together to get involved and be part of the team.

- c. Our Council wears maroon vests. We would have vests on hand on the day of the First Degree Exemplification Ceremony so that new members could immediately feel a part of the team.

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- 6. We approached our Plan to make the Council **More Visible** to the Parish from several different aspects:

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- a. We wear our vests on the First Saturday and Sunday of each month. There is nothing better for Council Visibility than when the Lector, the Eucharistic Ministers, the Cross Bearer and the ushers are all Knights and wearing their maroon vests.

(Slide 16 – Click #3)

- b. Publishing a picture with a write up of the Knight of the Month and the Family of the Month as an insert to the weekly Parish Bulletin.

(Slide 16 – Click #4)

- c. Whenever we had a fund raising event we would put an insert in the weekly Parish Bulletin thanking the Parish for their support.

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- d. Build and install a Council Bulletin Board in the Parish Dining Room. Not just a Bulletin Board with a bunch of words that no one would read but a Bulletin Board that had life to it with pictures. The Bulletin Board like the Program we were building was going to be based on the Seven Program Activity Area's in the Surge...with Service. Each area would have its own small board within the Board itself. In this way we could show the Parish, and therefore prospective members, where we concentrated our focus. To this we also included the current month and next month's Calendars. Also included was the picture and write-up of the Knight of the Month and Family of the Month. The final portion of the Bulletin Board was a simple shelf on which to place all the various pamphlets about the Knights of Columbus including Form 100's so that our Parishioners could learn more about becoming a Knight or a Knights family and the benefits to be gained through membership.

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7. We talked about how to get new members to hit the ground running and to be active in the Program.

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We developed a New Member Information Packet that was reviewed right after our meal at the conclusion of the First Degree Exemplification Ceremony.

This New Member Information Packet included:

- a. Program Activities Guide – our – Surge...with Service
- b. Program Activities Organization Chart
- c. Membership Interest Survey

- d. Council Calendar for the next two months
- e. Current Month Newsletter
- f. List of Officers & Directors with their contact information
- g. List of their fellow new members and sponsors with their contact information.
- h. “How to Pray the Rosary Pamphlet”.
- i. “Welcome to the Knights of Columbus” containing a Form 100.
- j. The Shining Armor Award Card

(Slide 17 Click #3 & #4)

8. We restructured our monthly financial reporting and built a Council Budget for the Year.

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As we began to build our Calendar with the activities that we planned, Dwane and I began thinking of how our business meetings would be different than ever before. The major part of the meeting would be presented by the seven directors with reports of past activities and what there was planned for the next month. In addition there would be our new Financial Secretary’s Report and the Treasurer’s Report. Couple this with a report from the fourth degree, our field agents report along with a important words from our District Deputy and we had the makings of a very long and potentially erratic meeting with each Directors report varying in content from the other and making it critical for everyone to listen in order to catch everything that was being presented.

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At this point I thought about how every day business meetings are conducted to keep them on track which was by using Power Point Software. Dwane and I discussed this and felt this would be the vehicle to keep us on target. The one major difference that we discussed was

that because a lot of our membership had never used Power Point we would spell out everything we were going to say rather than use “bullets.”

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This proved to be very important as our Directors, who would be presenting most of the information at the meeting, come from all walks of life and were certainly not Power Point experts. Just like everything else that we did during the Council Year we built on our first Power Point Presentation:

(Slides 20 – 23)

1. We added pictures of activities. These latter, upon the installation of our Council Bulletin Board, became the life blood that makes the Bulletin Board the continuing story of our Council.
2. Probably the second greatest benefit, that we did not originally realize, in addition to getting our meetings totally organized with all the material we had to discuss was that we were now able to send the Power Point Presentation out to all our members via email on the morning following our meeting, thus giving anyone who was not able to make the meeting the entire presentation of what they missed. This was a major accomplishment in the Communication area.

The following is a list of some of the high points during the Council Year:

September –

1. 35 Knights in attendance for our Business Meeting

(Slides 24 & 25)

2. First Coats for Kids Donation Breakfast –
 - a. 70 New Coats
 - b. 120 Slightly Used Coats

(Slide 26)

3. First Parish “Keep Christ in Christmas” Tree Planted

(Slide 27)

4. First Pro-Life “On Our Knees” Prayer - Knights & Parishioners pray around the Altar for 40 Days of Life

(Slide 28)

5. First Membership Information Meeting Held
6. Power Point makes its debut at Council Meeting

October –

1. 42 Knights in attendance for our Business Meeting
2. Knights we have never seen are wearing Maroon Vests to Mass.
3. First Wives Appreciation Dinner Dance

November –

1. First Dinner Business Meeting with 48 Knights in attendance

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2. First Food Sunday Weekend Starts – in first six months collected over 5,000 lbs of food and earned the Food Pantry a \$7,500 credit with Second Harvest Food Bank.
3. First four new members of the Council Year installed.

December –

1. 44 Knights and their wives attend the Council Christmas Party

(Slides 30 &31)

2. First “Keep Christ in Christmas Tree Lighting & Dessert Social.
3. First Special Advent Rosary

January / February –

- 1.57 Knights in attendance at Business Meeting

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2. First Altar Server Recognition Breakfast

(Slide 33)

3. First Wheelchair Donation Breakfast

(Slide 34)

4. First Woodcutting & Splitting for the needy.

(Slide 35)

5. Council Bulletin Board is Installed

(Slide 36)

6. First “Wine Experience with 120 Parishioner in attendance.

March/April –

(Slide 37)

1. First Lenten Fish Fry – Average Parish Attendance 95

(Slides 38 & 39)

2. Cool Room Project for the N.C. Food Pantry which was awarded the State Program Award for Community Service.

(Slides 40 & 41)

2. Parish Auction – Sponsored by the Knights. Most successful in Parish History with profit of \$30,500. Money split between Parish and Council.

3. First Council submission of State Awards.

May –

1. State Convention – Awards Presentation

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2. Pastor Leads Parish in Celebration of Council Accomplishments

(Slide 43)

3. Final 4 new members installed bringing Council Year total to 21 or 263% of Quota.

June –

1. Program Planning for 2011-2012 conducted.

2. Key officers remain in position for another year to build continuity.

3. Director's Terms to conclude at different dates to keep continuity of Program.

(Slides 44 & 45)

4. Wheelchairs Distributed to Shriners Hospital for Children, Catholic Charities, and Veterans of Foreign Wars.

Three Major Keys to Our Councils Success:

1. Commitment by the Grand Knight and his team of Officers & Directors.
2. Support of your Pastor – if there is tension between your Council and your Pastor set up a meeting with him and your top 5 officers to discuss the situation. You will find that communication can go along way with making a bad situation much better.
3. Support of your Wives. In our case it is outstanding. Next week we will be at the Sprague Lake Rest Stop on Interstate 90 for four days. We will be serving motorist's free coffee, lemonade and cookies. We had 38 wives step up to bake 300 dozen cookies that we will be distributing.

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The Change in Culture that we developed truly brought our Council to a higher level. The results were truly amazing. It takes commitment on your part to make it happen. The Surge...with Service is the tool that will help get you there.

On this slide is our Council Web site where you can visit in more detail the activities that we did this past year as well as our monthly newsletters. Also, please feel free to write us at the Council email address if we can help in any way as we feel sharing experiences between Councils can lead to a better program .

We hope that some of the information we have shared with you today will generate the excitement and commitment that are necessary to take your Council to a higher level. **THANK YOU**

