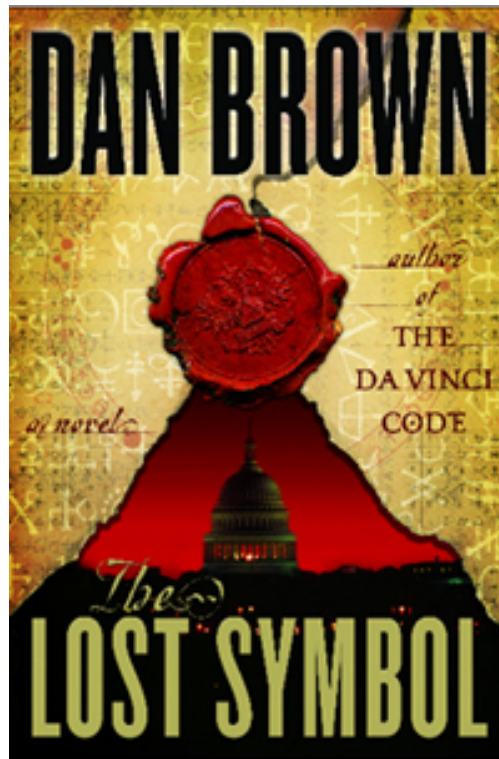


# A MARKETING PLAN

*For Iowa Freemasonry*



By the Public Relations Committee  
Of the Grand Lodge of Iowa  
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## The Opportunity

When the movie “National Treasure” starring Nicholas Cage was released by Disney in 2004, few of us knew the movie would feature Freemasonry so prominently, and likely even fewer of us knew that our fraternity would be portrayed so positively. More to the point, the movie grossed over \$347.5 million at the box office around the world and introduced a new generation of moviegoers to Freemasonry.

An even better opportunity is right around the corner. Sometime in 2013, Columbia pictures plans to release a film version of Dan Brown’s blockbuster novel “The Lost Symbol.” When the novel was released in 2009, it broke all sales records up to that time, selling a million copies in its first day alone. In the few years since, many millions more have read the book. These fans represent a ready-made audience for the film, and unlike with the release of “National Treasure,” we know in advance that it will portray the craft positively. For, as Bro. Chris Hodapp has said, Dan Brown’s novel is “a love letter” to the fraternity.

Because of this upcoming film, we have a unique opportunity, but the next few months are critical. Instead of preparing to debunk falsehoods and craft responses to the usual attacks (much of which the novel has already done for us), we can spend the time developing and implementing a plan to capitalize on the increased visibility we will have.

Yet while the release of this film represents a unique opportunity in the short term, we should not miss the long term opportunity that’s also available. We can use this opportunity to build a better and more permanent marketing and public relations infrastructure within Iowa masonry, one that will be able to carry on the same work long after this current opportunity passes.

This document presents a plan for doing just that.

## Document Overview

This document is organized and presented much like a traditional business marketing plan. Businesses develop marketing plans to help guide decision-making as they bring new products to market. Often this process involves critical assessment of the organization's past marketing efforts and analysis of the competitive landscape for such products.

Even though Freemasonry is a not-for-profit endeavor and even though it is a fraternal organization, we should view our organization as offering a product, and we should view our fraternity as being in competition with other organizations offering similar products. Only an honest assessment of strengths and weaknesses combined with a clear statement of goals will advance the interests of Freemasonry in Iowa over the long run.

With that in mind, this document presents a marketing plan for Iowa Freemasonry. It is organized into the following sections:

1. Purposes, Goals, and Outcomes
2. Market Analysis
3. Strategic Objectives
4. Tactics and Methods
5. Implementation

## Purposes, Goals, and Outcomes

A well-written marketing plan should begin by clearly stating the purposes, goals, and desired outcomes of the plan.

### *Purposes*

The primary purpose of this plan is to articulate a few ways in which to use the opportunity represented by the release of the film version of the Lost Symbol as a pivot point for Iowa Freemasonry and to help develop a strategy that will stimulate interest in the fraternity among non-members.

But this document also serves the following purposes:

- To encourage Iowa masons to look *internally* in order to fully understand the results of past marketing decisions.
- To remind Iowa masons to look *externally* in order to fully understand the market in which we compete.
- To set goals and provide ideas for future marketing efforts that every Iowa mason can support and help to implement.

### *Goals*

For a plan to be of any lasting utility, it must have clear and achievable goals. The goals of this effort are:

1. To remind Iowa masons that there is a market in which Freemasonry competes for prospective members.
2. To raise awareness of the opportunity presented by the Lost Symbol among Iowa Masons and mobilize them behind an effort to capitalize on it.
3. To identify concrete actions that can be implemented in the near term to take advantage of the increased visibility that will accompany the release of the film.
4. To turn the increased visibility into an increase in membership.
5. To create a permanent marketing and public relations infrastructure within Iowa Masonry that will endure long after the current opportunity passes.

## *Outcomes*

The primary outcomes we seek to achieve through this marketing plan are to make ourselves easier to find and to bring more worthy and well-qualified candidates into the fraternity.

In order to be able to assess whether we're meeting our goals and achieving our outcomes, we must measure our progress to the greatest extent possible. While quantifying and measuring the efforts of hundreds of lodges and thousands of individual masons is a difficult prospect, it is possible for this project to measure at least a few things:

1. This plan calls for the creation of a unified website. The technical capabilities of the website will allow us to track, summarize, and analyze a lot of data such as page views, unique visitors, and other information that will tell us a great deal about how effectively our message is being disseminated.
2. The unified website will include a submission form for interested men to inquire about membership. We can count these inquiries and we can track whether we receive petitions from them, whether we raise them, and how long they remain dues paying members.
3. This marketing plan calls for Iowa masons to get much more active on-line and in social media. Websites like Facebook allow us to quantify things such as "followers" and "likes." This, too, is useful information about how effectively we are disseminating our message.
4. Men who wind up petitioning a lodge the "old fashioned way" may nonetheless have been influenced by this marketing campaign. We can change our petition form to collect information about "how they heard about us."
5. The Grand Lodge has long tracked membership statistics. We can benchmark our membership, petitions, raisings, etc and compare future numbers against past trends.

Tracking this kind of information won't necessarily yield easily predictable results, but it should provide us with the ability to make a baseline assessment of whether our efforts are having some effect and if so how much.

## Market Analysis

To properly develop and execute a plan for the future, it is necessary to think about the growth of the organization in market terms and to fully understand the competitive environment facing our organization.

Freemasonry exists today in an era of declining civic engagement. Much ink has been spilled discussing our fraternal membership trends. Much of this is good analysis and it is vital that we “count things,” for if we don’t measure something we can’t understand it, and if we can’t understand it, we can’t change it. A few years ago, the Grand Lodge published a paper on the topic which is now available at [http://www.iowagrandmaster.org/pdf\\_storage/Membership%20Retention.pdf](http://www.iowagrandmaster.org/pdf_storage/Membership%20Retention.pdf). More current membership statistics are available in the recent proceedings of the Grand Lodge. The numbers speak for themselves, and they aren’t encouraging.

Tracking membership trends alone isn’t enough. We must place ourselves within the other, broader changes at work in society today, and analyze how they affect membership independently of our organization. For even if we can’t affect these broader social changes, we can at least understand and adapt.

Since the 1980s, membership in all kinds of civic organizations has declined: from bridge clubs to bowling leagues to the NAACP. Many churches are struggling. The Odd Fellows and other fraternal organizations face similar membership problems. The paradox is that participation in such groups is on the decline even as population in America continues to grow.

This phenomenon has been much commented on, including in the well known book by Robert Putnam called *Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community*.<sup>1</sup> Participation rates among baby boomers and Generation X-ers are lower than those of prior generations. The import of this is that there is a finite number of people out there looking to join an organization. And Freemasonry further narrows this pool by being very selective about who is allowed to join.

In short, there is a market in human resources, and in today’s market there is a shortage of “joiners.”

In addition, Freemasonry isn’t the only game in town. There are many many other fraternal organizations which should be viewed as our most natural competition. But those organizations aren’t the only competition. There are also softball leagues, fantasy football

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<sup>1</sup> You can read the first chapter here:  
<http://www.nytimes.com/books/first/p/putnam-alone.html>

leagues, golf leagues, church groups, choruses, and many other activities. There is the whole universe of things on which a man might choose to spend his leisure time.

There always have been things that compete with Freemasonry, of course, but Freemasonry must recognize that when human capital is already limited and headed for a further decline, there will inevitably be winners and losers among all the various groups that seek participating members. We should view these groups as competition, and we should think about how to articulate what we have to offer in such a way as to persuade people to join *our* organization rather than another one.

When people have so many things to choose from, they will make choices about what activities to join based on the value seen in the activity. In that way, people are consumers of civic groups, and civic groups should think of their organizations as offering a product or a service that provides value back to those consumers.

While all of this may seem like a daunting environment in which to grow and strengthen the fraternity, we do start with a few advantages.

First, in the square and compass, we have a unique symbol that people around the world instantly recognize and associate with our fraternity. We also have substantial name recognition. Both of these assets are crucial pre-requisites to developing a strong brand. With a strong brand, we will be more able to create messages that resonate with people.

Second, we have a physical presence in nearly every community in the state. There is always a lodge nearby for you to join. This is something to build on within local communities and is an easy way to raise our visibility.

Third, we have a rich history and a unique place within western civilization that provide mystery and intrigue to the uninitiated and a depth of experience to members that continues to provide rewards over the course of a lifetime. Even other fraternal organizations can't offer what we offer in this regard.

In short, Freemasonry has a unique product to offer in the marketplace for human capital. We are a fraternity, but we're more than that. We are an initiatic society, but we're more than that. We are an organization committed to charity and community, but we're more than that, too. We have more to offer than any other organization. We need only get better at differentiating ourselves from other groups and communicating those differences clearly enough that our message breaks through all the other "noise" out there.



## Strategic Objectives

One element of a good marketing plan is to figure out how to sell your product. This requires the development of sound marketing strategies. Our objectives in developing such strategies are to activate our existing membership (especially dormant members), to bring new members into the organization, and to make sure those members are a good fit for our organization. If we were in the business of selling widgets, we could employ a number of standard marketing strategies.

### *Sell More Of The Same Product To Existing Customers (The Low Hanging Fruit Strategy)*

One strategy we might employ is to sell more of the same old widget to existing customers. In Freemasonry, we can't reinitiate members, but we can reach out to those members who don't attend or to those members who have dropped out but who may be interested in getting involved again. A lot of the work in this area falls under membership development and should already be a focus of every well managed lodge in Iowa. That being said, it helps to remember that one way to sell more widgets is to reach out to existing and former customers to see if their interest can be renewed. It should be relatively easy to sell a product to someone who has bought it in the past.

### *Attract More Sales With A New Or Improved Product (The Retention Strategy)*

Another strategy we might employ is to develop new or improved widgets and sell them to both new and existing customers. In the case of Freemasonry, many innovations are at least frowned upon if not explicitly disallowed. But not every innovation. Around the world traditional observance lodges and european concept lodges are being formed with the express intent of providing a better, newer, or more stimulating experience for masons of all experience levels. Even without going to such lengths, there are many small and easy ways to improve the masonic experience. Every lodge could brainstorm ways to improve its ritual, expand its educational offerings, or increase its fellowship opportunities, and many already are. All such efforts are designed to make Freemasonry a better product, and it should be relatively easy to sell a new and improved version of a product.

### *New Markets For The Same Old Product (The Real Growth Strategy)*

Yet another strategy for selling more of a product is to find new customers to buy an existing product, and in many ways this is the strategy that represents the primary focus of this plan. So much of Freemasonry is universal and unchanging that it's probably best to think of ourselves as constantly selling the same product. But that may in fact be our

product's chief virtue. For if it's true that men today feel change is the only constant, that meaning and purpose are elusive in a culture of rampant self-dealing, or that now more than ever better men make a better world, then we have only to show them the door to the lodge. Products like that can create their own markets provided that consumers are made aware of them.

With these strategies in mind, it only remains to develop tactics and methods that are aligned with them.

## The Unified Campaign

Like any business marketing plan, this plan will require actions to be taken by many people at many levels. Some things will be done by the Grand Lodge, but many others must be done by enterprising constituent lodges who buy into this campaign and support the Grand Lodge's effort to spread masonry more broadly throughout Iowa.

This section describes two key elements developed by the Grand Lodge's Public Relations Committee which will serve as the foundation for all of the tactical efforts to be undertaken by the constituent lodges. These key elements are: (1) a unified theme to carry our message; and (2) a unified website to handle the uptick in interest we hope and expect to result from the release of the film.

### *The Unified Theme*

The first tactic we must adopt is a single message, a "unified theme" which the Grand Lodge and every constituent lodge can use as part of one coordinated effort to raise the profile of Iowa masonry. This is a critical element to the success of the effort, for if we cannot adopt a single message, we risk diluting our efforts or working at cross purposes.

### **The unified theme is "What was lost can be found."**

This unified theme is explicitly intended to play off of the movie and more importantly to remind them what it is we have to offer.

### *The Unified Website*

Just as we need one unified theme in order to best capitalize on the efforts of so many lodges and masons, we need one place where those who hear our message can go and find out how to either learn more or to join.

The unified website is [www.iowafreemasonry.org](http://www.iowafreemasonry.org).

The Grand Lodge public relations and technology committees are working in concert to develop this website. It is being developed as clean, easy to use website where prospective members are not bombarded with too much extraneous information. To the greatest extent possible, all advertising, communications, and public relations with non-masons should direct traffic to this site.

## Tactics and Methods

This section identifies a number of tactics and methods that can be adopted in furtherance of our strategic objectives. Because a full presentation of tactics and methods directed at traditional membership or innovations in lodge activities is beyond the scope of the current document, this section focuses on the tactics and methods that can be adopted to carry our message to non-members (The Real Growth Strategy).

It should be noted that not every item listed is required. Clearly, not every tactic or method will be effective or feasible for every lodge. The primary purpose of this section is to clearly present a few ideas in order to focus our efforts and channel them in ways that seem likely to successfully advance our strategic objectives.

1. Encourage the members of your lodge to go to the movie and to invite interested friends. Go out afterwards and discuss the movie.
2. Organize a lodge outing to attend the movie. Make sure non-Masons are invited. Go out afterwards and discuss the movie.
3. Call the local paper and offer to give an interview about your lodge and your connection to the film. By way of example, in 2009 with the release of the book, the New York Times ran a story entitled “Masonic Lodges Open Those Mysterious Doors.” The article focuses on the treasures many lodges contain and about the members of the public who flocked to our lodges merely out of curiosity. Call your local paper and offer to do a similar story. Local papers often need human interest stories about community attractions, and free media attention is good media attention, particularly if it is a positive story. You can read the NY Times story here: [http://www.nytimes.com/2009/08/21/arts/design/21antiques.html?\\_r=0](http://www.nytimes.com/2009/08/21/arts/design/21antiques.html?_r=0)
4. Finish those long planned improvements to your lodge’s website. Make sure there is a link to the unified website on your site.
5. Have T-shirts or other apparel printed with the unified theme and include the unified website address. Don’t forget to include our trademark: the Square and Compass. Wear these shirts when you schedule that lodge outing to the movie. Wear them when you go out after the movie.
6. March in a local parade. Bring a banner with the unified theme, unified website, and the square and compass. Wear your T-shirts.

7. Improve the signage on your lodge building. Your building is your best free advertising venue. Consider signage that includes a link to both your website and the unified website, or at least a lodge phone number.
8. Print business cards with the name and address of your lodge. Make sure it includes the unified website address. And the square and compass. Be ready to hand these cards out at the lodge movie outing.
9. Hold an open house at your lodge for members of the public. Discuss “symbology.” Advertise this open house within your local community. Use social media to get the word out.
10. Run a classified ad for a few weeks in the local paper. If you keep it short, it’s pretty cheap. Make sure to include the unified theme and the unified website address.
11. Buy search terms on Google, Yahoo, or Bing related to Iowa masonry or to the film. Make sure the ads take users who click on them to your website or to the unified website.
12. Buy an ad on a billboard for a few weeks around the time of the film release. Make sure it includes the unified theme and the unified website address.
13. Buy an ad on the side of the local public transportation/bus system. Make sure it includes the unified theme and the unified website address.
14. Ask about corporate sponsorship on Iowa public radio.
15. Print flyers and post them at the local public library or college campus message board.
16. Buy one of those ads that runs on the screen before the movie starts. Make sure it includes the unified theme, the unified website address, and the square and compass. Make sure the ad runs when you schedule that lodge outing to the movie. Wearing your T-shirts, of course.

Each of these items has a different cost, a different likely audience, and a different success rate. Implement those things that work for your lodge, but above all do *something*.

If your lodge has enough funds, or is motivated to raise them, consider purchasing some paid advertising. Think of such expenditures as an investment rather than a cost. Remember, if advertising during the Super Bowl didn’t sell stuff, corporate America wouldn’t do it.

## Implementation

The purpose of this section is to make sure the plan described in this document can be implemented and executed properly. It identifies a number of specific actions that need to be taken, identifies who needs to take the action, and by when.

ACTION	BY WHOM	BY WHEN
Development of marketing plan	Public relations committee	Done
Creation of unified website: <a href="http://www.iowafreemasonry.org">www.iowafreemasonry.org</a>	Public relations committee	Ongoing
Creation of unified theme: “What was lost can be found.”	Public relations committee	Done
Secure Grand Lodge Support and Funding	Grand Master and Officers	Done
Communication of marketing plan to constituent lodges at area meetings	Grand Master and Officers	Begins October 2012
Formation of a placement committee to handle requests and expressions of interest that come in through the unified website	Grand Master and Officers	November 1, 2012
Tactics and methods adopted at local level	Constituent Lodges	Ongoing
Sharing of ideas and marketing efforts with other lodges	Constituent Lodges	Ongoing
Reports to Grand Lodge on efforts undertaken	Constituent Lodges	Ongoing
Change to petition forms to collect information about whether marketing efforts caused the petition to be submitted	Grand Secretary	January 1, 2013
Track and report on whether marketing efforts cause increase in petitions	Grand Secretary	Ongoing
Track and monitor traffic to unified website	Technology Committee	Ongoing