

# Lessons for Masonic Leaders



From [MasonsLeadBetter.com](http://MasonsLeadBetter.com)

# 3 Things to do when you feel no one is listening to your vision



Every leader encounters a time when despite their best efforts to inspire others to buy-in to their vision, they don't feel enough people are paying attention. When this occurs it is time to stop, reevaluate, realign, re-prioritize and begin anew with a positive attitude. However, it may be

difficult to motivate yourself because the prevailing thought in your mind is "why bother if no one is listening?"

So to refocus your thinking in a positive manner you need to do the following things to get you back on track.

**Talk to your mentor –** Go back to the person you confide in and tell them how you feel. They will provide you an honest assessment of your situation. Tell them of your efforts to achieve your vision, your successes, your failures and your plan to continue. Ask them to help you to evaluate your plan and provide you advice on how to proceed. You should leave this meeting with a better attitude because you needed someone to listen; a good mentor is a good listener.

**Talk to your inner circle –** With a preliminary adjusted plan in hand, meet with your leadership inner circle and discuss it with them. Together go over the vision, the goals and the action plans you all originally agreed upon. Determine what is working, what is not and make the necessary changes to continue toward the vision.

# Lessons for Masonic Leaders

Talk to the influencers in your organization – These are people whose opinions are respected by a large number of followers. Discuss your vision again, share with them your revised plan and ask them for their thoughts. Spend more time listening than talking. If they agree with the vision and the plan to achieve it, ask for their support. If not, go back to your inner circle for another discussion and revisions. Continue doing this until you have buy-in from the influencers.

This process will help you rid yourself of the thought that no one is listening. It focuses you on the positive aspects of your vision and connects you with people who are supportive and encouraging.

Another situation to be aware of is your sense of urgency to achieve the vision and your organization's urgency will probably be on two different levels. Even with a well thought out vision, a well defined and communicated plan, organizations tend to be very complacent. John P. Kotter, author of "Leading Change" and "Our Iceberg Is Melting," in his book "A Sense of Urgency" said, **"Highly destructive complacency is, in fact, all around us, including in places where people would deny it, deny it, and deny it still more."**

This organizational complacency will eventually discourage a leader, especially if he has a vision that he believes, if achieved, will greatly improve the organization. A leader with a drive to achieve a vision has a great sense of urgency. He is impatient and sometimes cannot stand to watch as the organization continues its complacent plod toward nowhere and without a unity of vision.



# Lessons for Masonic Leaders

## Properly Burning Your Candle at Both Ends



A friend sent me an email with a series of these creatures and this one caught my eye. The picture on the left is by Terry Border and you can find more of his creations [on his blog](#) .

*Any leader worth his salt is passionate about the people and the organization he is attempting to lead.*

*With that passion often comes the tendency to try to do too much, and as the picture suggests, it will burn you out quickly.*

I don't want to discuss the negative aspects of "burning your candle at both ends," but the positive things you should always be doing as a leader.

### **What are the things a leader should be doing constantly?**

#### **Maintaining and displaying a positive attitude**

Napoleon said, "A leader is a dealer in hope." How can you expect your followers to work hard toward the organization's vision if you, the leader, are not positive and encouraging?

# Lessons for Masonic Leaders

Assist and support those whom you have empowered. – Always be connecting with your people and making sure they have all the tools necessary to carry out their responsibilities. Are there roadblocks? If there are, remove them. Is there something else they need to do their job? If so, get it for them.

Assess your goals and adjust if necessary. – Always be re-examining and be willing to adjust if conditions change.

Communicate – Don't ever stop doing this. Keep everyone armed with the latest information.

Learning – Leaders are always learning. They don't stop and they always look at every encounter with people as a learning experience.

Know your limits – Remember that Superman is a fictional character so don't try to be him. Rely on your team.

So, if you are a passionate leader and find yourself burning your candle at both ends, stop and assess your activity. Is it positive activity or are you headed for a meltdown?

# Lessons for Masonic Leaders

## But We've Always Done It This Way!



I received this button from Stephen Wright who is from Muskogee, Oklahoma. Steve used this button when he served as a District Deputy Grand Master and a member of the Masonic Education Committee for the Grand Lodge of Oklahoma as a reward for creative thinking.

One of my favorite quotes is usually attributed to Ralph Waldo Emerson, but in fact was published in 1905 in a book by Muriel Strode. She said, *"I will not follow where the path may lead, I will go instead where there is no path and I will leave a trail."* The quote defines what a leader does; takes people and their organization where they may have not been before. It also fits right in with the thinking behind Steve's button that a leader should not be constrained by what has been done in the past, especially if it has not been effective or is not consistent with the organization's vision.

*When a leader envisions a path for an organization it many times requires that he spend a considerable amount of time to convince people that this unknown path will lead to somewhere positive and the sacrifice and hard work to get there will be worth the effort.*

However in doing so he should be careful not to offend the "But we've always done it this way people." Establishing a positive relationship with those who may resist change is necessary in achieving buy-in for a vision.

Here are some thoughts on how to approach these people.

# Lessons for Masonic Leaders

1. Indicate you have some ideas and would like their opinion.
2. Describe your ideas and explain why you believe they will benefit the organization. Be careful not to criticize the way things have been done in the past because it may be perceived as telling the person that they have been doing it all wrong.
3. Find areas of agreement. Look for ways that your ideas improve on long-established practices instead of completely abandoning them.
4. Ask the person if they have ideas for improvement and if they do discuss how they might be a part of your plan.
5. Understand that you are advocating change and it will occur slowly. So don't try for complete buy-in all at once.
6. Ask for permission to consult with them again as you continue to develop your plan.

So the statement, "But we've always done it this way," should be looked at as an opportunity for education and discussion rather than an announcement that the person is not open to change. If the person is approached properly it can lead to a better relationship and hopefully to an ally for your plan to effect change.

# Lessons for Masonic Leaders

## Standing Tall As a Leader



Robert Pershing Wadlow (February 22, 1918 – July 15, 1940) was the tallest person in history for whom there is irrefutable evidence. Wadlow is sometimes known as the Alton Giant or Giant of Illinois because he was born and grew up in Alton, Illinois.

Wadlow reached 8 ft 11.1 in height and weighed 439 lb at his death at age 22. His great size and his continued growth in adulthood were due to hypertrophy of his pituitary gland, which results in an abnormally high level of human growth hormone. He showed no indication of an end to his growth even at the time of his death.

Robert was not only physically tall, but morally as well. He was a member of Alton Chapter Order of Demolay and Franklin Lodge #25. At the Franklin Masonic Temple in Alton, visitors can ponder the massive chair of this modern Goliath. One website said this about the chair; "Alton's business leaders can be forgiven if they sometimes sit in Robert's chair, musing over the fate that makes some men big while others suffer shortsightedness and shortfalls."

"Standing tall as a leader has so much to do with the unseen portion of who you are."

That unseen portion begins with the principles and ideals that you believe are important in your life. Once you understand what is most important, you then can begin to behave in a manner that conveys the "who you are" to others.



# Lessons for Masonic Leaders

## Illustrious Sovereign Grand Master of the Masonic Universe



This cartoon caught my eye because the Masonic Fraternity with all its various organizations bestows a lot of titles. Most who receive these titles (and fancy headgear, jewels, medals, etc.) , carry them with pride and continue to be the same person they were before receiving their ornately sounding moniker. Unfortunately there are men who receive these titles who believe that the title is all they need to be a leader. So if you think because you are now the *"Illustrious Grand Sovereign Master of the Masonic Universe Who Reigns Supreme"* and that title has instantly made you the best leader on earth, think again because it just ain't so.

Hans Finzel, in his book *"The Top Ten Mistakes Leaders Make,"* wrote a chapter entitled *"Dictatorship in Decision-making"* in which he said that "dictator leaders" make a big mistake when they believe their own press reports. He explains that the bigger they think they are, the more they think they know and the more they attempt to control others.

# Lessons for Masonic Leaders

Those who covet their titles believe they were entitled to their position and so in their minds the title announces to everyone that they are in charge and truly a leader. Concepts like servant leadership, team building, empowering, mentoring are farthest from their minds. And woe be it to an officer below them who speaks of collaboration, multi-year planning and organizational goals and forgets to remember the leader's title.

I believe that a title should remind you of the responsibilities you have assumed. These responsibilities in the Masonic Fraternity are explained to you in the EA degree as "...three great duties;" to your God, your neighbor and yourself. As you take on leadership responsibilities you should be reminded that you are further obligated to act in a manner consistent with the great tenets of the fraternity; Brotherly Love, Relief and Truth. You should lead with these guiding principles all the while remembering that it is your job as a Mason to be constantly improving yourself.

In the book "*The Fifth Discipline*" Peter M. Senge discusses the "art and practice of the learning organization." He says in the long run the only sustainable competitive advantage your organization has is its ability to learn faster than the competition. He calls personal mastery the "cornerstone of the learning organization" and states that "an organization's commitment to and capacity for learning can be no greater than that of its members."

*"If, as a leader, you concentrate on practicing the Masonic values that define the fraternity and continually strive to improve yourself, the title you hold becomes rather insignificant."*

# Lessons for Masonic Leaders

Instead of being defined by your title, you are defined by your actions. In practicing the tenets and values of the Fraternity, you can lead from anywhere regardless of your title. You, as my friend and brother RWB Tim Strawn likes to say, "have become Masonry." Once you become Masonry you constantly demonstrate that your leadership motives are clear; that is, everything you do is for the benefit of the organization and your actions are not motivated by your lofty sounding title.

John Maxwell calls leaders who use their title to lead "positional leaders." He says that leaders at this level only have people following them because they have to, not because they want to. Your title has given you certain rights to lead but only your correct actions will determine whether you continue to have your followers' permission to lead.

Don't let the "horns on your hat" make you believe you are a leader. Personal mastery, Masonic values, servant leadership and solid relationships with your followers will make you a leader. Start making yourself a better leader, practice Masonry.

# Lessons for Masonic Leaders

1  
4  
7  
2  
5  
8  
10  
3  
6  
9

## Hey Mr. 7 Would you mind helping me?

An article that appeared in the paper was about unusual first names. One name discussed caught my eye, it was 7. This guy's parents named him 7 after a man his father had become friends with in the military; his name was 7 or Sevin.

I began thinking about leaders who do not take the time to develop strong relationships with their team and followers.

***"So I suppose that instead of names, leaders might as well assign everyone a number, you know, for the convenience of the leader. After all, the leader has more important things to take care of rather than people."***

John Maxwell defines influence as the true measure of leadership. To have influence as a leader, especially when asking for significant sacrifice and commitment, you must have established a positive meaningful relationship with your team and followers. So if you haven't, they pretty much are just numbers to you.

How does a leader start a relationship with someone? Here are some thoughts.

# Lessons for Masonic Leaders

Start with the simple stuff and find out about their background. Salespeople use the acrostic FORM which stands for family, occupation, recreation and message. The message part of FORM refers to their beliefs and what they value. This is where you begin to understand people on a deeper level

1. Ask what inspires them, what makes them laugh, cry and sing.
2. Ask what they hope to accomplish in your organization; in the next year, the next five years and beyond.
3. Listen more than talk
4. Make them aware how you, as their leader, intend to help them accomplish their goals.
5. By investing your time in someone you establish a powerful connection and they understand that they are more than just a number. They are cared for.

So if your team members and followers are just a set of numbers you have some work to do.



# Lessons for Masonic Leaders

## Waiting for the White Knight of Masonry

There seems to be no shortage of Masons who are dedicated to doing what they believe a lodge does and work very hard at it. But I have often said that in many cases these proud, hard-working Masons' energies are misdirected. Misdirected how?



One of our District Deputies commented that everyone seems to be waiting for some "white knight" to ride in and save the craft.

We seem to have, in many cases, a system that focuses on the process of creating new Masons and have built an organization that supports, inspects and rewards the process and not the quality of the output. There are lodges creating Master Masons like Apple is creating iPads but no one has asked: "now what are you going to do with them?"

Our focus is on the evaluation of the creation process but the greater focus should be on the education process that occurs after a man is made a Mason. There, in my opinion, is the "white knight" we have been looking for.

If we supported our purpose of "taking good men and making them better" with an education system that was designed to do just what that statement says, and then inspected and rewarded that effort I am sure we would see wonderful results.

# Lessons for Masonic Leaders

I recently asked a Masonic leadership class to evaluate this statement:

***"Masons will constantly endeavor to provide an excellent masonic experience through impressive, meaningful ritual, competent and well executed lodge management while creating leaders who will serve Masonry, their communities and their families."***

This statement was intended to expand the "taking good men and making them better" statement and further define its meaning and purpose. It also purposely used the term "masonic experience" with the intent that the "experience" would be defined by meaningful lodge programs and education. And once those programs are in place a system would be designed to evaluate and reward them.

So what does all this mean?

It means that if we changed our focus to educating men instead of making Masons and then encouraged, supported and rewarded this effort, Masonry would thrive.

The "white knight" we are waiting for has been there all along. We even say it; "We take good men and make them better." We just need to put some things in place to back up our statement.

If you want to be a leader think about how you can put programs in place to make men better. Don't think you can't do it because you can. John Wooden said, "Do not let what you cannot do interfere with what you can do."

Rededicate yourself to living every day the principles of Masonry. Each of one of us is the change we seek for our craft. If you first learn to lead yourself, then you can lead others. You then start to reveal the "white knight" we all are looking for.

# Lessons for Masonic Leaders

## Lessons learned at a Masonic Funeral



“Last night I stood at the casket of a friend and prayed, not for him but for me.”

I awoke as if startled by some loud sound but as I sat up in bed the house was quiet. The words above immediately just came to me as if my mind had been holding them waiting for my eyes to open so it

could engage. It didn't take me long to realize why they were there as I had participated in a Masonic funeral service for a friend the previous evening.

I replayed the previous night in my mind and I can recall praying, but honestly, I can't recall praying for myself.

*The Masonic memorial service uses these lines:*

“The last offices of respect and love that we pay to the dead are useless forms except as they are lessons to the living.”

I had heard this line many times before but not until this morning did it become so vivid and then sunk so deeply into my thinking.

*In another part of the service the Master offers this admonition:*

# Lessons for Masonic Leaders

“Our present gathering will be without profit unless it awakens serious reflections and strengthens us with resolutions for the future. Seeing then my brothers, the uncertainty of life and the unsubstantial nature of all its pursuits, forget not that preparation which is wisdom to make and weakness to defer.”

Like the previous statement this line is also very familiar but again has never had such a deep impact until now. It seems that my Masonic brother's funeral service did “awaken serious reflection.”

I was still trying to understand after so many times participating in Masonic funerals and hearing these lessons why this time did the experience linger in my mind and cause such contemplation, when I received word of another Brother's death. This time it was someone even closer to me and I felt compelled to lead the Masonic service. So the next few days were spent reading and familiarizing myself with the service and not much thought about “why” we were doing it.

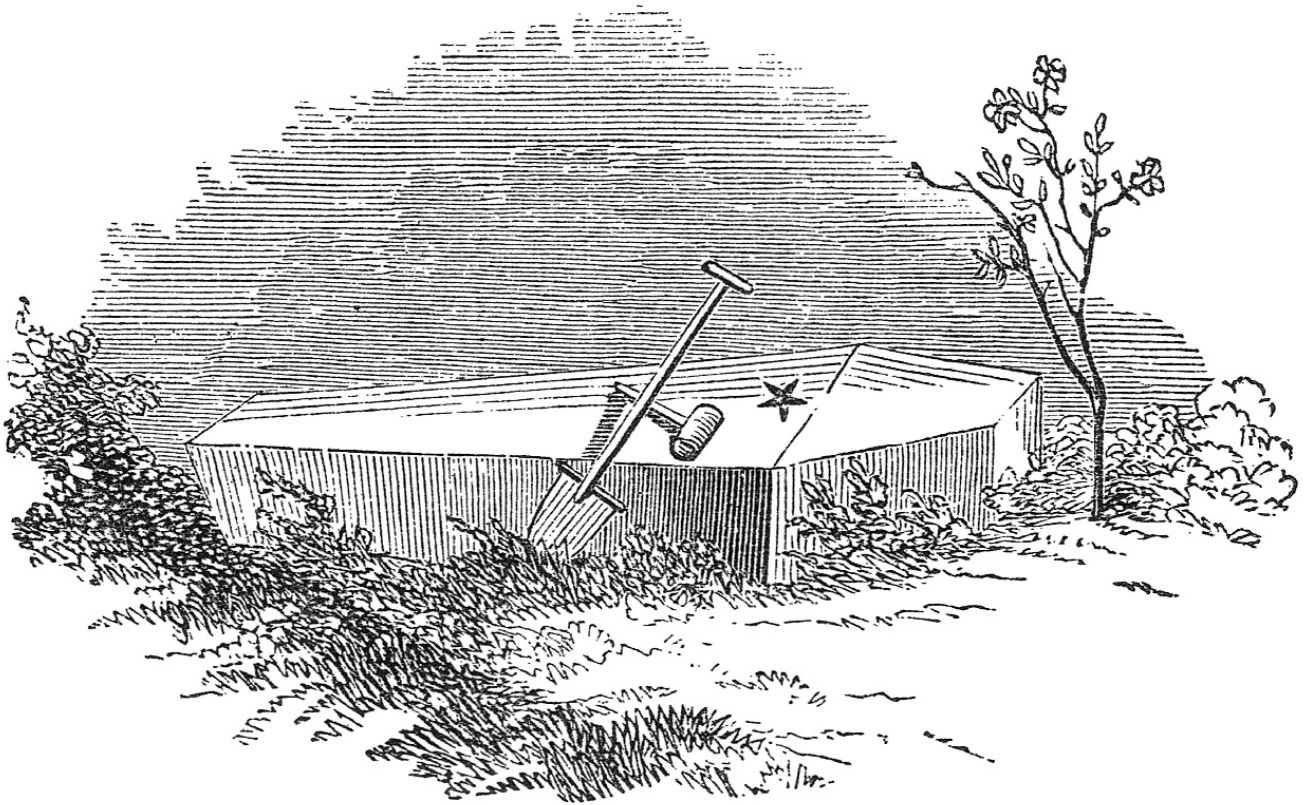
I also didn't give much thought to the fact that I would be conducting the service on my birthday, that is until now.

Did the words in the service I heard one week and then actually spoke the next week; did they strengthen me with “resolutions for the future?” Did these instances of mortality cause me to pause and really understand that life is very short and that I should, as we also say in the service, “embrace the present moment” and prepare for our own death? Did I learn those lessons? I hope I did.

# Lessons for Masonic Leaders

So back to the vivid words that startled me that one morning; “last night I stood at the casket of a friend and prayed, not for him but me.” I said I didn’t recall praying for myself but I guess without knowing it I was. I was praying that I learned the lessons that my Brother’s Masonic service was designed to impart.

I was praying those who will someday stand at my casket will pray also; not because I died but because my death caused them to pause and think.





# Lessons for Masonic Leaders

## Do You Have a Masonic Legacy?



Not many Masonic leaders have probably thought about the legacy they want to leave to the Fraternity.

They assume an officer position, get wrapped up in the management side of leading, follow the rules, progress to become the presiding officer, get lauded and applauded and for some it's over.

But others progress further.

They assume an officer position, get wrapped up in the management side of leading, follow the rules, progress to become the presiding officer, get lauded and applauded and it's over again.

But others progress further. They assume an officer position.... You get the picture.

# Lessons for Masonic Leaders

In Dr. Maxwell's *The Law of Legacy* he offers four thoughts on how leaders should develop a legacy.

1. ***Know The Legacy You Want To Leave*** – As a leader have you identified organizational problems you want to solve, change that may be needed or inspiration you want to instill?
2. ***Live The Legacy You Want To Leave*** – Words alone will not build a legacy. You must demonstrate by your actions that your legacy is important to you.
3. ***Choose Who Will Carry On Your Legacy*** – Have you developed relationships that will allow you to mentor those officers below you? Legacy comes when leaders are created that will carry on when you are no longer around.
4. ***Make Sure You Pass The Baton*** – Your greatest joy should come when you see other leaders step up and do even a better job than you did. Be able to walk away with great pride knowing you had a part in creating these leaders.

*Is your legacy just a bunch of titles you have accumulated to list in your obituary? Wouldn't it be much more rewarding to know that your contributions will live on?*

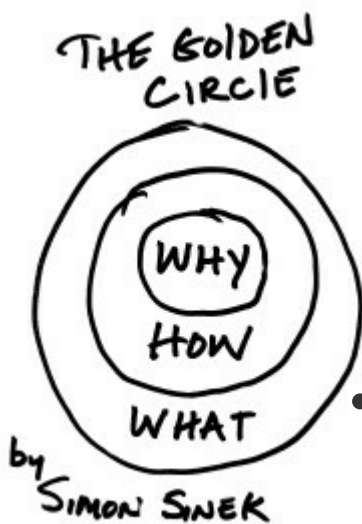
***How do you create a Masonic legacy? You create another leader. Start doing it today!***

# Lessons for Masonic Leaders

## Do You Know Why You Are A Mason?

Has anyone ever asked you “What is a Mason?” and then asked why you became a Mason? More importantly, have you ever asked yourself these same questions and deeply thought about them?

For many years I really never gave it deep thought. I was, when asked these questions by non-Masons, able to give some type of an answer but it didn't come from any intense soul-searching. My discovery began when I became aware of a book by Simon Sinek **Start with Why: How Great Leaders Inspire Everyone to Take Action**



The premise Simon Sinek outlines in his book uses a concept he calls the Golden Circle as depicted in the graphic on the left. The outside circle he labels “what.” Moving inward he labels the next circle “how.” And finally the innermost circle he labels “why.” Here are his definitions of the what, how and why.

- **What** – every business, organization, and person in these organizations can explain what they do. They can describe their product or their service.
- **How** – most every organization can also tell you how they do it.
- **Why** – very few organizations can clearly articulate WHY they do WHAT they do.

He explains that normally when someone is asked about their organization they respond by explaining WHAT they do. They also may throw in HOW they do it. But in most cases leave out WHY they do it. This approach he contends is not inspiring and does nothing to build a following.

# Lessons for Masonic Leaders

Mr. Sinek then gives examples in the book of how great organizations and great leaders don't start from the outside circle and go in, they inspire and build great organizations because they have thought about and communicated to everyone in their organizations "why" they do what they do. They then use the "reason why" to build a following. He says,

***"Most people don't buy WHAT you do, but WHY you do it." – Simon Sinek***

This concept when applied to Masonry really lit up light bulbs in my head. It caused me to ask the question "Can I explain my WHY when it relates to being a Mason?" Am I able to use my WHY to inspire other men to join? Since I clearly had never thought about it in this context I had to start understanding my WHY.

I realized that discovering my WHY began a number of years ago. I had begun to write and present leadership development programs for the Masonic Fraternity and felt that they needed to tie directly into the beliefs and values taught in the three degrees. I read the ritual of all the degrees to better understand the duties I was asked to assume and the values that are the essence of Masonry.

I didn't start a journey of deep esoteric inquiry to understand what others thought about Masonry but concentrated on WHY the beliefs and values of Masonry were important to me. HOW was I going to use them in my life?; my life right now.

Each of us may have some simple statements that explain what Masons are or why we joined Masonry. "*Masons make good men better,*" or "*My father or grandfather was a Mason;*" or something else along these lines. I as well had a simple reason for joining; my father-in-law was an active Mason and Shriner and he suggested that I should be as well. But these statements do very little to inspire other men to belong.

# Lessons for Masonic Leaders

I suggest that finding your WHY in Masonry is an on-going process. One tied to understanding yourself, the ritual, the lessons and values presented in the degrees and using them to continually educate yourself as you live your life according to Masonic principles.

## ***Here are some steps to follow to help you find your Masonic WHY:***

1. ***Write your eulogy.*** Imagined you have died and your family and friends have gathered for your funeral. Who will be there? What would you like them to say about you? By writing your eulogy you will discover the values and behaviors you want to define you.
2. ***List the values and behaviors from your eulogy*** and write a short paragraph explaining what each means to you.
3. ***Write a paragraph about Brotherly Love, Relief and Truth.*** What do these basic tenets mean to you? How has your life changed because Masonry taught you about these things?
4. ***Using what you discovered about yourself*** and your meanings of the tenets of Masonry write a short paragraph you will use when asked "What is a Mason?" or "Why are you a Mason?"

## ***Here is my WHY statement:***

*"I am a Mason because I believe that no man should live his life in a random manner. He should be guided by a plan that honors his God, supports his fellow man and provides a way to improve himself daily. Masonry has provided this plan for me and I will live in pursuit of knowledge and understanding for the purpose of providing for my family, supporting my Masonic brethren, and improving my community. My continued hope is that I live respected and die regretted."*

***What's yours? I would enjoy reading it – email it to me –  
mike@masonsleadbetter.com***



# Lessons for Masonic Leaders

## Have a Great Masonic Day!

You can learn more about the Masons Lead Better workshops and programs by going to our website. Just click on the button below.

[Learn more](#)