

The Delta Chi Fraternity, Inc.
WHAT DOES IT TAKE TO HAVE A SUCCESSFUL CHAPTER?

Think about it. Is it a big house? Active alumni? Intramural championships? What?

When we look around at what we consider to be the successful fraternities, we see big houses, active alumni, and intramural championships. We then take those as the reasons why chapters are successful and conclude that, if we are lacking any of these, then we cannot be successful because we don't have these things.

We are confusing the issue. Those big houses, active alumni, championships, or whatever, are not the causes but the results of a successful chapter, and results occur from action taken or not taken. That big house didn't just happen. It was worked for, alumni help (in terms of ideas and time as well as money) was solicited, and committees were organized. All of the involved alumni were cultivated through the establishment of a well thought-out and implemented alumni program, designed with both the chapter and the alumni in mind. Those championships, like most everything worthwhile, took weeks of practice and hard work.

So we can say that successful chapters do things that make them "successful," things that unsuccessful chapters fail to do either altogether or simply with less conviction. Two important points can be made here:

First, if you want to be successful, form the habit of doing things that failures don't like to do. Plan. Organize. Rework ideas. Try again. You won't like to do them either, but you will like what they enable you to achieve.

That leads to the second and most important point: successful people are motivated by the desire for pleasing results while failures are motivated by the desire for pleasing activities.

A good example of this can be found in rush. Lets compare two different approaches. The first chapter selects almost all of its new members from the friends of its current membership. The only attempt at contacting anyone else is through a mass mailing inviting "interested" people to their "rush parties." The chapter continues to lack diversity and often complains about the poor turnout of rushees at their parties. Later on, they wonder why so many of their members only show up for parties and don't remember that that was how they introduced "fraternity" to them.

The second chapter takes the list of prospective members and either calls them on the phone or visits them personally. They make an attempt to get to know the individual. They introduce him and often his parents to the meaningful side of fraternity first and solidify his (and many others') decision to join by having a party where he can meet all the members as well as his future associate brothers. Not only friends of the current membership are contacted. Diversity and strength are not only encouraged, but sought out.

As a result, the second chapter has not only the number of men it needs, but more importantly, the quality. The other fraternity hides behind false claims of "quality not quantity" as they pledge four men for the second year in a row. They fall further behind in their payments and suffer through another year of meager social activities, due to a lack of money. Simply put, the fraternity that went out and talked with friends and total strangers alike did well in rush (thus obtaining pleasing results) while the other fraternity, which was motivated by pleasing activities (talking with friends and partying), did poorly in rush.

Think of your own chapter and decide if it is motivated by activities or results. Think of all the things your chapter has been willing to do without in order to avoid doing the things "it" does not like to do.

We still haven't traced success back far enough. Since every action or inaction first has its origin in a thought or an idea, we need to look at attitude.

There is a native tribe in South America which has been dying from a strange disease for many generations. Finally, it was discovered that the disease was caused by the bite of an insect which lives in the walls of their adobe homes. The natives have several possible alternatives. They can kill the insects with an insecticide, they can destroy and rebuild their homes, they can move to an area that does not have these insects, or they can continue to live and die early in the same way they have for generations.

They have chosen to stay and die early. They have resisted change. They have chosen the "easy way out."

How many of our chapters have chosen the "easy way out"? How many of our chapters have resisted change and resigned themselves to a life of "permanent potential," possessing the ability to be better but not taking advantage of it?

When they could have changed their associate member program to develop not good associates but better members, they talked about it, but somehow slid back into the old ways. When it was suggested that they should hold a rush seminar to overcome the lack of rush skills, they said they couldn't find a date when everybody could be there. When their scholastics looked suspect they resisted all attempts to improve their grades. Quiet hours were "too restrictive." Steak and bean dinners were "too embarrassing." "Scholarships only award brains and not effort." When it was pointed out that if they would pledge more men they could operate in the black (for a change), and increase their social budget, they countered with "we want quality, not quantity."

We simply put forth far more effort trying to adapt ourselves to the hardships of a poor living than it takes to adapt ourselves to the hardships of making a better one.

We seem to have placed on ourselves an "invisible ceiling" which won't allow us to "stand up straight." We walk around stooped over claiming we could stand up but don't. That invisible "ceiling" is our assumptions and these assumptions determine our performance by placing artificial limitations on our behavior.

How can your chapter be successful?

It is not enough to say it wants to change. It must truly want to change. It must talk, eat, think, stop, change. We become what we think and we move in the direction of that which we dwell on. We must change not just for one rush week but for all time. Not just for one associate member class but for all associate member classes.

Don't expect it to just happen.

The key to success is in that moment when the chapter could go either way: regress to the old ways or move on to the new. That moment is not the time to give up but to redouble your efforts or to try a new approach. The proof of the quality of the men in your chapter is in their actions and reactions when that time comes and it may come more than once.

With effort, your chapter could be one of the best, if not THE BEST, fraternities on campus. That is a FACT, if it already is the best, than you can widen the gap between you and second best."

Stop saying, "I'll believe it when I see it" and start saying "I'll see it when I believe it."

Success is **ATTITUDE**.

** This article first appeared in the June 1979 *Delta Chi Quarterly*, and is just as relevant today as it was then.