

TECHNOLOGIES FOR THE 12TH STEP: CHAT

The experience of one Central Service Office

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▶ I will talk about:

- ▶ The environment
- ▶ The implementation
- ▶ The results
- ▶ Our learnings

▶ I hope to learn from you

- ▶ How many have implemented or considered it?
- ▶ How did you implement it?
- ▶ Your experiences and learnings?

TECHNOLOGIES FOR THE 12TH STEP: CHAT

▶ Northeast Central Services Inc, Tulsa, OK

- ▶ Tulsa: A small city with metro population of a half million or so.
- ▶ Serving an AA population of some 2800 members in 130 groups.
- ▶ Inspired to implement chat by NAATW 2018 by talk by San Francisco

THE ENVIRONMENT
TECHNOLOGIES FOR THE 12TH STEP: CHAT

▶ The Technical Implementation

- ▶ This is the easy part!
- ▶ There are several chat services available.
- ▶ Started off with the Slack Based Technology used by San Francisco
- ▶ Slack offered more features, but we found it hard for volunteers to learn.
- ▶ Our implementation is based on the tawk.to service
 - ▶ In html, simply insert some JavaScript at the end of the page.
 - ▶ They also provide a WordPress plugin

THE IMPLEMENTATION

TECHNOLOGIES FOR THE 12TH STEP: CHAT

- ▶ The Non-Technical Implementation (the hard part)
 - ▶ Some design considerations
 - ▶ Who will answer the chats.
 - ▶ A few selected tech savvy folks.
 - ▶ Anyone with a smart phone who volunteers
 - ▶ Both have definite advantages. We chose the second option
 - ▶ What hours will chats be answered? We chose 24 hours, 7 days
 - ▶ How will the chat responders be scheduled?

THE IMPLEMENTATION

TECHNOLOGIES FOR THE 12TH STEP: CHAT

▶ The Non-Technical Implementation (continued)

- ▶ We sought volunteers by soliciting the fellowship
 - ▶ Only requirements were 6 months sobriety and familiarity with a smart phone
 - ▶ We found and trained 24 volunteers
- ▶ The volunteers were scheduled in a rotation.
 - ▶ Chat duty was for one week at a time.
 - ▶ For the week, 5 people for day shift, 5 people for night shift.
 - ▶ One of the 5 would be designated as primary each day.
 - ▶ When a chat comes in, all 5 are notified, primary is to respond if available, if not one of the others will respond.
- ▶ Chat administrators get emailed transcripts of all chat conversations

THE IMPLEMENTATION

TECHNOLOGIES FOR THE 12TH STEP: CHAT

▶ **Who initiated the chats from our website?**

- ▶ 43% were from drunks with NO knowledge of AA
- ▶ 15% were from family members of drunks with NO knowledge of AA
- ▶ 11% never responded after we answered the chat (they “hung up”)
- ▶ 4% were new to the area looking for local AA information
- ▶ 15% were from AA members looking for meeting or calendar information
- ▶ The remainder were looking for treatment or detox, were drunks wanting to complain, etc.

▶ **We get only 2 or 3 chat requests per week**

- ▶ But given over half are from those with no knowledge of AA, we think it well worth offering the service.

THE RESULTS

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▶ What have we learned?

- ▶ The task to setup was straightforward, involving some settings.
- ▶ There are also some parameters to be set on each responder's smart phones.
- ▶ All in all, the learning curve was not too steep; required little technical expertise
- ▶ I have been impressed by the quality of the chat responses, even those by relative newcomers.
- ▶ Whatever rotation scheme is chosen, maintenance and communication of the schedule are critical. That includes sending reminders of upcoming shifts.
- ▶ As with any set of volunteers, some number will not be committed. The admins watching the transcripts need to weed these out soon.

LEARNINGS

TECHNOLOGIES FOR THE 12TH STEP: CHAT

▶ And finally, I hope to learn from you

- ▶ How many have implemented or considered it?
- ▶ How did you implement it?
- ▶ Your experiences and learnings?

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