NAATW 2021 Collaborative Online Workshop Report
September 17th-19th, 2021

This is a collaborative document with input entered into the highlighted areas by event participants, NAATW committee members and presenters. (Thank you!)

To reference what we published last year, see the [2020 crowd-sourced notes](#).

445 registered - average attendance was 100-200 people

Friday, September 17, 2021

AA's Coming of Age with Technology

Billy N.

Intolerance + Inflexibility + Lack of Vision = Irresponsible
Tolerance + Flexibility + Vision = Responsible
How did we get here?
COVID has gotten us to a new place
"Nothing worse than a belly full of beer and your mom's head full of Al-anon"
Why weren't we actively adopting online meeting technologies before COVID?
Why has AA been so far behind in technology?
I learned about [Discord](#) from a young person I work with
Fear - people are scared of technology
Reads from May 1996 *Grapevine* - "is there a danger that some people will replace in-person meetings with online ones?"
People are affected by their outside AA world - if they don't get the same thing inside AA it's frustrating - example of communications taking a long time
Tolerance + flexibility + vision = responsibility
If you looked at the agendas of the last 21 service conferences:
- we spend most of the time on wordsmithing
- you know what we don't spend any time on? how to better carry the message with the technology available to us today

When the first AA website was created its only purpose was Public information
There has always been this fear that technology would interfere with in-person connections
Early on the numbers of women were much higher in the online meetings than in the in-person fellowship - the hypothesis is that some people feel more comfortable reaching out digitally
At my first general service conference if you brought a laptop you were considered rogue

If Bill W. was alive today AA would have been on the cover of *WIRED* magazine 10 years ago!!
We had lots of challenges as we could communicate faster because not everyone does that

3 invited speakers to GSC - people want free content - the further we go the more free content people are going to want - you can talk about books and book prices - if you want to engage with your fellowship you better harness new technologies

If we don't adopt new technologies we may not be relevant to people who are looking for us

Story of Kindle - we didn't have the right lawyers who knew tech, we didn't think about comments. We built an AA e-reader. 2 years later we realized we couldn't really create our own software - because we didn't have our own help desk.

You can find ways to work within traditions and harness technology

We hear that people who don't have money won't be able to participate in AA if technology is required but let's be real about the facts. In america - the # of welfare agencies that keep in contact with their clients using digital methods is through the roof.

Recurring contributions
AA in the past has made it difficult for people to contribute because they didn't take different kinds of payments

We can't forget age as a form of diversity
Does every district meeting and assembly need to be in-person?
We can use technology to reach people whom we haven't been able to reach and use technology to allow more people to participate in service

We spend a lot of time in AA service telling people we need you in service - then they commit a class A service felony: they show up with a new idea - we often look like we don't want new ideas. How do we get more people involved - how do we stop the apathy. The question isn't why aren't they involved, instead we should look at ourselves and say: What are we doing in service that is driving people away? What are we doing at assemblies that prevent people from coming back? Can we change the rolling of eyes and micromanagement? We should be out there empowering the next generation to come up with better ideas than me.

AA Around the World: Japan AA's adaptation of technology

Yuzo M.

Starts sharing about their GSO adaptation of technology after the pandemic hit.
We didn't have a way to communicate that we were meeting online due to the historical background of AA in Japan. There are 7 areas in Japan - we launched one local office in each area. This made it possible to carry the message nationwide but the challenge was - where do the online meetings send their meetings - which office? The members of the technology committee and from their ideas our GSB launched a portal site to share online meeting information. The tech committee got many requests to get support on how to use Zoom. The first request was to hold the General Service Conference on Zoom.

Fuminobu A.
General Manager of Japan's AA General Service Office (JSO)

Talked about how they handled their Asia-Oceania Service Meeting (AOSM), with pandemic shutdowns. There were members that needed much assistance with technology so they all worked together to help one another with the technology; very important all were able to participate and that they were unified. They needed a way to vote that was easy to count and clear to see on the virtual platform. They hand-made large red paper dots on popsicle sticks that they would hold up in front of their cameras, showing the red circles on their screens so that the votes could be seen and counted. 30 voting members. Hiroyuki K. put together a calculator so that they would be able to see if they were keeping up with the 3rd legacy procedure - ensuring every vote was counted. It was challenging but being unified was of most importance and everyone left the meeting with smiles on their faces. The Asia-Oceania Zone consists of 75 countries. Their newsletter is Box 916.

Hiroyuki K.

We shouldn't rely on just one tool - not just using Zoom - this workshop is using Zoom and Slack and Google Documents. We need to consider a variety of tools - it's not easy but a very good opportunity.

Behind the scenes of the Japan GSC online - the whiteboards were for voting
They made physical nametags for people too.

They had a 40th anniversary of AA in Japan - they made a video
We saw a virtual tour of their General Service Office. We saw the first edition of the Japanese Big Book - handwritten in 1989!

Saturday, September 18, 2021

Now That We've Figured Out Virtual, Let's Do Hybrid

Joyce C.

Happy, Joyous & Free Group Titusville, FL.
Attending meetings while driving home!
Visit a hybrid meeting prior
YouTube videos
Zoom tutorials
Equipment needed
Test and retest
Room setup
Establish precise setup directions
There will be glitches - new issues will always come up and will be addressed
Things will go wrong. Do it anyway!!

Mike M., Tommy S.

Patterson Group, Putnam County, NY (60 miles north of NYC)
Slides - (link)
Much larger room than previous presenter
- Large space - can fit over 200 people in normal times, 70 people currently
- more problematic acoustics
- Multiple cameras used - each camera also doubles as mic

Decision made to have a dedicated Zoom Chair
- Co-host privileges
- Zoom bouncer

Imperative to have good Internet connection, church allows use of their WIFI
Lazy Susan helps to position equipment / camera (point towards speaker)
Equipment recommendations found in slides
7th Tradition contributions difficult to get from virtual participation - further reason to have in-person participants
PayPal needs credit card back-up
Several camera angles
- Close up on presenter
- Wide angle on room
- Close up on audience

Pass the reading then kick to Zoom participants
Took some time to get it going
Slight delays in audio

Live immersive demo on how it works in their room, with audience participation
People in masks, talking away from microphone
Folks don't like to pass microphones - settled on using the webcam's built-in microphone

Glenn W., presenting for Allen T., District Chair, D34

Due to capacity limit - lottery held for 20 spots, everyone else online
82% of polled participants would prefer to stay Hybrid
Hybrid format allows snowbirds and those on vacation to stay active in area
There is however, a vocal faction that would prefer to do away with Hybrid when not absolutely necessary - ongoing conversation and group conscience will decide
Ongoing training programs

Mike W. & Laura S.

Mike - Area 30 - Boston
- Mike shared this link: https://aaemass.org/area30/
- holding test session on having Hybrid Area meetings
- BCG Hybrid Tech Breakdown

Laura - Area 38 - St. Louis
- Works in AV
- Hybrid Meeting Considerations slide

Why Hybrid?
- Setting goals
  - Livestream? - is one-way communication enough?
  - Interaction? - two discussion / integration - full discussion, full communication
Set boundaries with communication before the event
Knowing your audience
- In-person vs virtual attendance numbers
  - Scale and cost differences
  - Full hybrid production may not be prudent for only 10 online attendees
Survey your area to find what the needs and wants are
Hybrid consideration questions from Eastern MO
Ultimately it comes down to what your area is comfortable with
Hybrid could be a good solution for long distances traveled to meetings
Budget considerations
- Buying equipment vs. hiring vendors
  - Consider what you're asking of your volunteers vs.paying a company
- Equipment gets expensive. Also a fluid, changing environment with new items coming out all the time
- Used equipment can be great
  - Facebook marketplace is a great resource

- Rent-before-you-buy gives you a chance to test run equipment before investing the full amount

Fix in pre-production!! - Test and test again prior to actual event
- Tech rehearsal before the big event gives you time to figure everything out and find out what you can fix and improve
- Spreadsheets and documents are your best friend
  - Here's how the setup works . . .
  - Easier to get get more people involved in service, rotation
- Setup time
  - Do what you can to "break this" before your event, so you know your issues before they happen in real time
  - Expense of "time in the space" is also a consideration
  - Cable management is key, and a safety issue
    - Gaff tape and cable ties are your friend
- Portable hotspot as the SHTF back up
- Does the connection fluctuate throughout the day at different times?

Gear - links in sheet
- [NAATW Hybrid Gear](#)
  - Lots of good audio, video, and other equipment recommendations
- Find what works for you, but try to find stuff that matches
- Bluetooth and keeping it simple is great
- Video side is exciting. Lots of high-end options out there. Try to keep it simple, lots of gear = lots of time
  - [Manycam app](#) - in use by NAATW right now
    - User friendly, powerful, cheap
  - ATEM mini switcher[ManyCam | Live video software & Virtual Webcam](#) -
    - useful to switch between many cameras - basically plug and play
- Fun other things
  - Elgato Stream Deck - programmable buttons
  - Meeting Owl Pro - good for smaller meetings
    - Try before you buy, can be distracting
  - Gaff Tape - don't use duct tape on your cable
  - Spike tape
- Stay away from Chromebooks!
- This list isn't all inclusive, and also not a checklist. You probably need only one audio and one video option
- Find what works for you!!!

Q&A session

Comment: What can we do for bare minimum equipment in rural areas? How can we handle a lack of technical people? It's challenging having only one person being able to run hybrid in the immediate vicinity, and pulling them in many directions.

Q: Is there a minimalist / must-have / nice-to-have equipment list?
A: Most important part is audio. Seeing people is nice, but hearing is key. [Manycam](#) too

Q: Voting over hybrid?
A: Count both virtual and in person. Two separate people counting those. And then get the final tally. Pre-planning is key. Breakout rooms with naming convention.

Q: Translation solutions for large groups?
A: Testing and more testing. Know your audience. Know who's going to be where. Remote interpreters have some cool things going on. Feed it where the demand is. Be careful of audio feedback issues. Could set up a separate virtual portion where the interpreter is the main voice of the meeting.

Comment: more experience, strength and hope from a large hybrid meeting. Redundancy. Keep the script / format consistent across platforms.

Q: Managing all the tech has taken its toll on the techies and it's getting hard to find people to step up. Another contingent feels it's time to end the hybrid (unified) meetings and go back to the way it was. How do we ensure the long-term sustainability of this technology? Not an easy trusted servant position to fill
A: Consider what you're asking of tech volunteers. Set up equipment, during-the-event management. If I'm working the event, I'm not really paying attention to the content. How do we ensure that all our members get to participate. How do we avoid the burnout of everyone? Trying to spread the load across other groups. All good points to consider.

Q: How are the multiple camera views switched from - asked to Patterson Group?
A: in Zoom settings.   Also [manycam](#)

Lightning Talks

Cindy M. - Florissant, MO

Intergroup office manager - Florissant, MO

Office forced to close during lockdown March 2020
Forwarded office phone line to personal cell phone. Quickly undid that as a flood of criticism flooded in (not the constructive kind). Ended up calling her cellphone still. Fielded wayyyy too many calls. Handled with the situation with as much grace as she could. Ended up commandeering the office equipment and doing it from home. "What are you doing to deserve getting paid?"   "You're not in the office, so why should we pay?"
Many voicemails on the office landline, Desperate and pleading cries for help. Noone knew what was going on. 40-50 calls per day to her cell phone. Dealing with breast cancer at the same time. Kept asking for help from the IG committee to no avail

Enter [Grasshopper](#)
Web-based phone forwarding
Setup options for info or press 2 to speak to a person
Can schedule which phone is being forwarded to
Calls show as coming from the IG office on your cell phone. It's Magic!!

She purchased it on her own dime, and got it all setup, without the express permission of the IG Committee. A little bit of drama, but "TFB"
Ended up able to help so many faceless alcoholics. So much gratitude in being able to carry the message. Being able to live up to the Responsibility Statement.

John E. - Bellevue, NE

Isolated communities - rural farm Nebraska
Problems finding facilities for meetings
For every interaction, needs to be a solution, not a problem
Training other people--finding volunteers to spread the load around
Need to be comfortable with several platforms. Need to be able to be tech support for our group members without seeing their setup.
Bring someone in as tech support who isn't the meeting host.
Need to be the solution for all of the tech things so that the facility is more willing to have us.
- HIPAA issues
- Healthcare workers required to protect client PII
- Can face camera to the wall and get audio only. Clients can get in view of the camera if needed.
- Need to demonstrate to facility that safety protocols are in place
- Had 3-4 lurkers in the meeting to scroll through room to catch trolls/Zoom bombers
- No Winnie-the-Poohing - meaning no shirts-only. Pants required to join

Meeting Venues
- We gave local facilities links to online meetings so they could join in
- We gave local facilities other contacts for online meetings - but recommended maybe local meetings would be best assuming your clients would be attending local meetings when they complete their treatment
- Creates a virtual bridging the gap when clients are able to attend meetings before release.

In every interaction we want to be the solution not the problem

Jim B. - Arnold, CA

Meeting Manager
Was printed guide 3~6 months. Had to keep up with all the COVID changes
Written in Python, SQLite to store database, PyQt5 for GUI

Technical walk-through

Q&A
Comment: Jim's project sounds similar to Twelve Step / Meeting Guide plugin. NAATW has great moments to learn and not have to duplicate effort

Q: to Cindy, did you get more help to answer calls?
A: 8 volunteers stepped up

Q: to John, how did you get the computers set up in isolated places, jails?
A: depends on place. Worked hard to carry the message

TIAA Forum Update and Status

Ross D.

Technology in AA online forum tiaa-forum.org
The forum and the workshop have changed the whole technology in AA scene
What kinds of things are on the forum:
> Using Wordpress
> Using the 12-Step Meeting List Wordpress plugin
> Feeding meeting data to the Meeting Guide app
> How to deal with a hacked website
> Zoom and Hybrid meetings for all sizes
Where they are going next:
> Make common info more available to the casual user
> Make forum discussions more orderly, easier to find information, better moderation
> Make the forum less dependent on the expertise of one or two individuals
Make the forum technology available to other AA communities

Open-Source Software Projects Update

Tim R. and Brian W.

Code for Recovery
- 8 Active members
- Started 2 years ago
- Community of volunteer developers
- Mission is to maintain and build on great work done for Meeting Guide app and supplemental technology

Twelve Step Meeting List plug-in for WordPress (TSML for WP)

- A way to store and maintain meeting lists within WP install
- Currently, over 700 active installations
- Not exclusively for AA - over 20 different fellowships are supported
- Is used for small, medium and large sites
  - Boston has 1,000's of meetings
- Easy way to feed meeting list information to meeting guide app
  - You do need to let appsupport@aa.org know about your feed
  - See: How to Connect to Meeting Guide -> Step 3: Provide access to your live data feed
- Easy way to share meeting list info with other users of TSML for WP
  - see : How to provide meeting listings to another entity

TSML UI
- Alternative to TSML for WP
- Eventually will replace TSML front-end
- Can take any JSON feed

GoogleSheets support
- An easy way to take meeting information stored in a google sheet and convert to JSON feed that can be consumed by TSML for WP and TMSL UI
- Latest update to Google Sheet API is causing issues

Misc.
- Project that is ColdFusion based
- Ability to support custom DB feeds

These have been shared as links in the chat during this presentation
https://demo.code4recovery.org
https://aasanjose.org/meetings
https://www.aasepia.org/meetings

Going Forward
- Focus on pulling key features and new features separate outside 'micro-services'
- Micro-services will allow more volunteers to contribute without having to learn entire project
- More contributions without endangering core functionality
- E.g. PDF code
  - Code in plug-in has not been updated regularly
- Member working a new plug-in to improve listing feedback
- API Gateway

Join the Code for Recovery Community
- All repositories on GitHub - https://github.com/code4recovery/

● Opportunity to contribute as developer or as technical writer

PI (Public Information) Discovered: Ensuring AA is found by those who need it.

Tim C.

AA has messaging problems
We need new approach and messaging that gets through
Why it matters
- 95,000/year deaths from alcoholism. And many, many more sobering statistics.
- And underreported
- Myths in AA
- Not breaking traditions; we attract folks to solution, don't advertise
- Its members remain anonymous--not an anonymous organization
- Traditions want us to retain our personal anonymity at the public level, but how can we help people when we remain truly anonymous among our community
- [Recent Box 459 article](#)
- alcoholics and non-alcoholics helped AA grow
- Go back to simple solution with high tech
- A little history - Bill and Bob; Marty M - her book, her studies; Dr. Jellinek - 'the curve'

Google Business listing
- Google does this for free and fun
- Need to take possession of yours to put out accurate information
  - Many default listings are called treatment or rehab programs
- Triangle Fellowship in Hayward, CA
  - Many, many views increase
  - Keyword - **alcohol recovery program**
  - Listing responsible for over 100 calls per month
- Free advertising for everyone!

Jen C.

Attracting people to AA
- Used to take out newspaper ads years ago in Yellow Pages; these days it's all online
- Google Business listing is the modern Yellow Pages
- Google is very good at obtaining information
- The algorithm make assumptions, some good, some bad
- AA has thousands of these listings--many are unclaimed
- Claiming your listing and filling out accurate information gets you more views

How to claim your Google Business listing--easy to do (note: need Google account to do this):
[[FAQ straight from Google](#)]

1. do a search, "AA near me" , etc
2. Click on the listing
3. Click claim
4. Click manage now
5. Enter contact info to confirm info Google has
6. Wait for postcard
7. Log into Google business account and edit info
8. Follow postcard instruction to verify
9. To edit click on info
   - Add keywords, change organization type (non profit v treatment center)

Perks
- Metrics / Analytics
- Who is clicking
- Who is going to your website from the listing

Resources

- Google Business Listings videos can be found here. The link is to a webpage. Scroll down the page for the embedded videos: https://tinyurl.com/GBLvid

- Shared Google drive for this group, past meeting notes, other links, Google Business listing information, can be found here: https://tinyurl.com/PICPC-Drive

More fun things
- Ads!!!
  - Get it out there, bus stops, restaurants, bars
- Twitter page
- Are pamphlets still effective in 2021?
  - Our best pamphlet is still the Grapevine. Released monthly.
- Links to Grapevine are great for backlinks (more SEO help)
- Backlinks to the YouTube channel
- Meeting Guide app also great for links
- CPC glide app https://area03azcpc.glideapp.io/
- PSAs on AA.org
- Reach out to other groups, build a network

- IDAA international Doctors in AA
- Employee Assistance Programs
- TIAA.org - forum
  - Now with PI/CPC category

Google / SEO
- Both paid and unpaid search results / organic search
- Easier now than a decade ago
- Old website
  - No 'backend' enhancements
  - No real keywords
- New website
  - Wealth of info tailored for professionals
- Wordpress rocks!
- Area 46, New Mexico
  - Members online password protected area
  - https://nm-aa.org/
  - https://nm-aa.org/cant-stop-drinking/
  - https://nm-aa.org/public-information/for-professionals/
- AA websites are so far down the search results
- Snippets
  - The little blurb that pops up in google search results
  - Good info for members, but not good info for the public
  - UK AA website is great
  - Direct simple info for the public
- Yoast, free SEO plugin for WordPress
  - Works great to get those keywords in there
- Incorporate medical studies into the website
  - https://academic.oup.com/alcalc/article/53/3/302/4796878
  - https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IgMjTIwh_LA
- National CPC PI GDrive folder
- October 2 workshop flyer   -   register

Q: Keyword suggestions?
A: There's a sheet in the shared folder. Getting a little dated though. Google has changed the algorithm. "Alcoholism" still #1. "Alcohol abuse" #2, "how to stop drinking" #3, "what is AA" #4 no one is looking for alcohol use disorder, only professionals

Q: How do I do a search for my site
A: ctrl + shift + N (cmd +shift + N Mac) incognito browser

Q: Tool for keywords?
A: Several keyword tools out there. Browser plugin "keyword tracker". Check on several platforms just to be sure. They are all kind of close but each is slightly different.

Q: How do churches / meeting places feel about us getting the Google postcard?
A: Google can make a listing for groups that meet in the church. Clarification, new business listing not associated with the church. Ask the pastor. Work with the church office.

Q: Yoast, free v paid, and keywords?
A: Yoast and Google will check your content for keywords. Free Yoast is free for most applications. Yoast is most popular, up to date, almost any idiot can use it. Most people aren't going to get their site up to par to take full advantage of the paid version. Content is better to drive it. For a large IG, Yoast paid would be worth it.

Let's Talk Technology with our General Service Office

Tracey G. Content Staff at GSO

Focuses on public-facing digital products and projects: Meeting Guide app, website, YouTube channel, pilot podcast, LinkedIn page; a lot of support for Meeting Guide
Meeting Guide initiatives: Helpdocs Knowledge base, Support Online Meeting listings, Integrate online intergroup listings, release roadmap
Website: new [aa.org](aa.org) is 90% done - it's a very content-heavy site

Patrick C
Public Information Desk at GSO

Patrick says it should be required for new PI staff desk assignments to attend NAATW
PI uses things like the website to ensure the PSAs are relevant, useful etc.
There is a lot of content on [aa.org](aa.org) they are reviewing
They have been updating video titles for improved SEO
For example; Changes -> We Made Changes to Stop Drinking
Meeting Guide app - they post press releases here and on LinkedIn
Google Adwords
Committee Assignment application - a member reached out to the Conference Coordinator at GSO saying they knew there was a manual process to assign delegates to committees. People kept telling the local member - ok thanks, but then the pandemic came and they had to figure out how they would do this very manual process. The software solution was successfully implemented this year.

Lorna G.
Director of Technology Services at GSO

Since last year there is such a dramatically different story: last year we had launched webstore and contributions module and were working fast and furious on Fellowship Connection

Fellowship Connection was launched in December 2020 - this is the way GSO communicates with local registrars - it has dramatically changed the way they work with the Area registrars - they are the drivers now

ERP: still continuous work is being done by the Technology Services team

There is a new corrections correspondence system they are getting ready to release

They are very focused on cyber security - they use a company called Know Before for cyber security testing and training

Beau B.
Chair of Technology, Communication and Services Committee on the General Service Board

8 years ago the office did not have someone tasked with the technology role but now we have Tracey and Lorna who have been here for two years

Beau has served with three General Managers

What will allow us to grow more? If NAATW is supported more by GSO like Archives

The inspiring part is the Fellowship is already doing this

He was watching on the forum: Code 4 Recovery guys jumping into action

They are showing up with a comprehensive media plan for AAWS strategic sharing

Beau shares as - it's helpful when the same person is the chair

They are exploring thread-based forums

How do they balance? the Board needs to stay out of the details that the GSO does - they are trying to serve up things like core tenets - they want to give guidance but let the professionals do their work - we've got great people doing cool stuff - that work behind the Code 4 Recovery is really helping to keep Meeting Guide relevant

The Board's goal ultimately is to give guidance to the office: get the still-suffering alcoholic to the local resources where they can get the help they need

- Our content needs to be accessible to all we serve
- We need to be present where our audiences are searching for our messages - we used to just put everything on aa.org but let's put our message where people are searching
- Our message needs to resonate with each of our audiences in voice and tone - this is right out of *Working with Others*
- We should identify and address any unnecessary obstacles
- Provide consistent and stable anchor points for members to connect to our content - members are the ones bringing us along - big hugs for Josh E.
- Identify better opportunities to share content
- How do we let the Fellowship know there are things to use - we want to share things from person to person - we'll see some things along those lines
- We will be posting a call for a Director of Communications - we should be on the lookout for who can we bring into this and engage - find someone who would be good at that job

Those of us who love technology have gotten more opportunities to serve

- We have two ACMs who are helping us think about the Comprehensive Media Plan and Content Strategy

- How can we make that content more searchable?
- When I said to them, "I'll see you this weekend" - they didn't know about it - we need to make things more shareable
- This is where we all need to be - we need to remember there are more folks that could be here

The service world has a need for hybrid or unified meetings -- how can we move forward?

BoFs (Birds of a Feather)

Anonymity in Social Media, Closed User Groups, and Open Forums

There is still fear, uncertainty, and doubt about the role of social media in our fellowship. We discussed anonymity as it applies to both the 11th and 12th Traditions. There was a brief disagreement about Facebook private/secret groups and their level of secrecy.

The topic of identity management in the digital age was presented, specifically the idea that identity is not fixed for some of the latter generations. It was agreed that maintaining anonymity in the socials was difficult; however, these types of communities within our fellowship will not be going away.

A point that resonated with many participants was that motive and intention were key factors in this conversation. Are we posting our birthday medallions to say, "look at me", or to show those who still suffer that recovery is possible.? Can there be too much anonymity? A participant shared their frustration that, without last names, they had lost contact with a number of members from a past stint of sobriety.

Digital 7th Tradition Solutions

About 25 people attended. Viv H. from Southern Delaware Intergroup, was the "moderator" who opened the discussion on the quest to build an online tool to accept 7th Tradition contributions from A.A. groups and members on the website that runs on WordPress.

GiveWp and Woo-Commerce are two WordPress plugins for 7th tradition contributions that several service entities are using (see San Francisco & Santa Clara for example). They have tiered pricing and come with different services based on level. Donor Box was another option suggested by a service entity who is using it.

Conversation morphed into 7th Tradition contributions to groups and how we are able to accomplish this, especially as more and more meetings are virtual.

Venmo, PayPal, and Square (cash app) are three services that have been used by many A.A. groups and each have their pros and cons. Using Zelle was another option discussed.

Transaction fees from many of these companies can be reduced if the entity has 501(c)(3) status. It was mentioned the TIAA forum has published info on how they accomplished this for themselves. One group actually used these guidelines.

GSO had some good information on the subject that was published last year that still may be relevant. This can be viewed here.

PayPal Pool was mentioned as a possible option, but upon reviewing the service, it turns out PayPal is discontinuing it.

Many groups (especially the online ones) have ended up with a very hefty prudent reserve. This is primarily due to having less expenses (no coffee, no rent and Zoom is minimal). Options to send surplus were to send to OIAA and TIAA.

Persuading / Training AA groups to try the Hybrid format

We had a lively discussion about hybrid AA meetings. First we acknowledged that strong desires have been expressed about keeping AA meetings in-person in opposition to creating hybrid meetings. The in-person meetings have a "vibe" of the comfortable, familiar, gathering of friends over a cup of coffee, while hybrid meetings make the virtual attendees seem remote and less involvedOther complaints focused on weak set up for the hybrid meetings; not testing the equipment ahead of time; computer in the front of the room disturbs people; members have extra responsibilities to bring laptops to every meeting, and the fear that "the new person does not stand a chance of staying sober in a hybrid meeting." [The one-to-one contact between newcomer and a potential sponsor can be established on Zoom (Molly L)]. These are common objections to the hybrid format. We next considered the pluses of the hybrid meetings.

Proponents of hybrid meetings in our BoF group argued that many AAs think that hybrid format does not really work, but they have not given it a chance to get started and have the kinks worked out. Hybrid meetings give access to people who cannot make in-person meetings; people in remote areas; people too ill or otherwise disabled to attend in-person meetings. [It is true that I have felt it a luxury to attend the virtual component of a hybrid meeting when I am very tired and do not want to drive 30 minutes to the meeting. My closeness and service to this home group is not diminished by the hybrid format, although I might not be the first to volunteer for something (Molly L.)].

Then, two issues came to the fore: (1) running the technology in a hybrid meeting is too much responsibility for one person and (2) filling positions of technology person for hybrid meetings is difficult. We talked about burn out and resentments by the people in charge of tech at each meeting. "No people step up to handle the hybrid meetings."
Several suggestions were made to address these two issues. Group officers could apprentice in the set up and running of the equipment in the hybrid meetings.
To avoid the equipment problem altogether, the hybrid meetings need only a laptop computer for the person linking to the Zoom attendees and a cell phone to be passed around for the audio/visual contact between the people in the room and those on Zoom. Groups who meet in

the same facility (clubhouse, church, etc.) need to coordinate with each other about sharing equipment for their hybrid meetings.

Lastly, we talked about the Group Conscience meetings of individual groups which may try the hybrid format. An open discussion of the pros and cons, the equipment needs, the money to be spent need to happen in a Group Conscience. The officers of a given group can rotate as trainees for the tech jobs.

Information on best practices for AA website SEO optimization

No notes taken

Sunday, September 19, 2021

Fellowship to the Rescue: The Inside Story of the First Virtual General Service Conference

Beau B., Greg T., Matt C., Mike W.

Beau says there is one person missing: MIchelle Grinberg (nonalcoholic), the chair of the GSB. As you are thinking about our journey during COVID, we all uncover the gifts we have: how can we bring those to bear in general service?
AA is going to be just fine as long as we remove anything blocking us from being of service. Our message stays the same; how we carry it may change.
Billy N. brought up fear of change and how we can innovate.

Mike W. met Beau pre-pandemic at ICYPAA in Boston; pre-COVID he did event planning and was a tech nerd. He edited the video that was created at ICYPAA anonymity from the Matt C. at the Boston ICYPAA Austin put in the bid for Austin - he had all these ideas about putting on online workshops so they were looking at doing elections on Zoom in March of 2020 - lots of the ICYPAA committees are regional or virtual - they needed to go online because it was hard to get together in person - the week of the planned event - everything closed down - he left that event scared - he's got all these emails asking - are you going to record this workshop on voting on Zoom?
Matt asked - where should we put this recording? - he was introduced to Josh E. from the Grapevine - the Grapevine put it on their YouTube. He didn't know at the time that the things he would do would have any usefulness - it was just cool. But that's how spirituality works - it was being guided.

Greg T.: this is Greg's third workshop - in 2013 Phyllis brought in the idea to have some type of NAATW. He is going to speak from a business organizational view - but the spiritual program of recovery underpins this.

In Nov. 2019 new tech leadership was brought into GSO - that jump-started a process to transition to a new ERP vendor - part of that was we needed to have a plan to handle an emergency if the office closed or our system got hacked.

At the end of January there was side-talk about a pandemic situation arising overseas; a team was put together to look at continuity of services. There was an alert from the physician on the General Service Board to the Chair and General Manager that this may really affect us - then we alerted the GSB.

We needed to look at the upcoming International Convention, General Service Conference and the need for potential remote work for the office. By the end of February we had already begun contacting some service providers in case we were going to think about how to do a GSC in a different format. There was a big concern about the International Convention.

We engaged an epidemiologist who became our specialist advisor.

The Conference desk and conference communications - agenda and the possibility of a new format for our meeting.

We talked to many vendors, but our internal experts emerged as the possible vendors; remember the GSO doesn't use volunteers to do the business of the conference: we work on a professional basis.

So by the end of the 2nd week in March our office was closed - within 48 hours we transitioned it to at least a 95% remote workforce.

Then we started a process to make a decision about the international Convention. Were we going to invite members to come to the epicenter of the pandemic in the US?

We involved lots of different committees

In late March we decided we would have a virtual Conference. We were reaching out to all our professional vendors and they were saying, "We aren't sure if we can do it." Meantime, our AA member professionals, Matt and Mike, were saying, "We could do it." But we had faith that something would work out. There was lots of fear - we had 6 weeks to plan a digital Service Conference online. We asked these guys to bring their hope and a crew. We asked them to document how we were going to do this. We knew there were eyes on us from around the world.

Mike: It worked out for me perfectly: I had just gotten laid off from my job due to the pandemic. I want to make sure we don't leave out a huge part of this - there were lots of calls - we started writing documents - thinking through all the nuances of how these things work - so many meetings on a timer.

As the team started coming together - all these people with different backgrounds to work together to make something happen - Mike and Matt hadn't even met - Mike got to meet Matt in person at his wedding

Matt: Beau texted on April 4th. Mike had reached out to Matt on Facebook. "They were building the plane as they were trying to fly it."

They were in the process of planning their first WEBYPAA - "my girlfriend was really aggravated with me at that point because there were so many online workshops."

[Greg or Beau?:] Not only did we have people that were rock stars, we had people who provided the diversity of service across the countries. Matt and Mike walked in as service - but this isn't a task that was service. [Matt or Mike?:] It was really important that I understood what Tradition 8 is: we were providing a service to make 12th step work possible, but I had never been a special worker before. We did pass on the framework: large spreadsheet walk-through
It was a few folks from GSO and the Board putting together a rough idea - could we do this? Then pitching that to the virtual team.

Jeanine F. "I had to grasp the oars of technology to navigate me through my recovery."
Shout out to Grapevine on how it helped support the story of what is happening.

NAATW Members Meeting

Avg. 90 people on the meeting

Minutes from 2019 were read
A motion was made and accepted to approve the minutes - minutes were approved
Doug G. gave the Chairperson's report - the Steering Committee was introduced
      We've had many hard decisions over these two years
      Last year we had a virtual gathering
      Our first hotel in Seattle closed in 2019; in 2020 we had a hotel but there was a lot of risk to signing a contract

      We are in good financial shape, since Bowling Green
      Program committee model works well
      Website progress is good
      Organizational stuff - Google for nonprofits
      Much progress on the host bid process
      We've worked on recording and preserving content, publishing the content while protecting traditions
      We need to get better at keeping volunteers engaged
      We need to get better at lining up bids/hosts multiple years in advance
      We need to figure out what to do to continue the success of the last two years while preserving the primary intent

      Treasurer's report
      This is a 2-year report

4. Treasurer's Report (9/23/2019 - 9/13/2021)

Organization Summary (as of 9/13/2021)		2021 Workshop Summary (as of 9/19/2021)	
Income	$3,948.20	Income	$2,215.00
Expenses	$3,159.30	Expenses	$837.90
Net Income	$791.90	Net Income	$1,977.10

New business:
New business gets on the agenda by submitting to the Steering Committee prior to the workshop - no new business was submitted

Slate of officers was proposed
Lois L. as Chairperson
Eddy M. as Alternate Chairperson
Carolyn O. as Secretary
Keith D. as Treasurer

Explanation of how we vote to disapprove

No motion to disapprove was made

Open steering committee
Karen P.
Buck R.
Heidi T.
Chris W.
David V.

Karen P. is the webservant for area 8. Her 3rd technology workshop, Sacramento, Bowling Green and the Virtual Workshop. Had a long career as a mainframe programmer - after that she went back to school to do more modern study of technology. She brings to us a desire to be of service. She has taken a lot of initiative to learn newer technology. She has served on the web committee for two years with the workshop. She does a lot of website for Area 8 which is in the San Diego area.

Buck R - sobriety date 1987 - served on program committee for last 3 years. Buck is a past 3-term delegate. He has worked for AAWS and Grapevine as a consultant - he is semi-retired but

he teaches technology to high school students. If he is elected to serve he'd be honored and he promises to work hard for all of us.

Heidi T. has 7.5 years of sobriety - she lives in the Bay area - she is at her first NAATW. She was part of this year's OIAA committee - her background is in law. She is a product of the pandemic in terms of online AA. She spent a lot of time helping people get on Zoom. She is newer to service.

Chris W. 8/8/2012 - lives in rural MO and he has trash internet. He brings a different perspective to high-speed internet - he has been the district technology chair - he has been doing IT stuff for 20 years. His specialty is in networking, security and compliance. Raleigh-Durham was his first NAATW and he has gone ever since - he is a past presenter at NAATW.

David V. 4/5/2015 He has attended two NAATWs - he felt guilty that his intergroup sent him to NAATW but the connections he had made helped him during the pandemic because he knew about TIAA and the Meeting Guide app and getting people to online meetings. He was a software engineer in the 90s. He went from massaging code to massaging people. He is really excited about using his skills to serve others.

First vote: 52 people voted
Buck R. was elected

Second Vote: 52 people voted
Karen P. was elected

Third Vote: 49 people voted
Heidi T. was elected

We opened for questions
Motioned to adjourn

The 12 Traditions in the Digital World

Carrie B.

Traditions Intro:
   "Today we in AA are together, and we know we are going to stay together. We are at peace with each other and with the world around us. So many of our conflicts are resolved that our destiny SEEMS secure. The problems of yesterday have produced the blessings of today.
   Ours is not the usual success story; rather it is the story of how, under God's grace, an unsuspected strength has arisen out of great weakness; of how, under threats of disunity and collapse, worldwide unity and brotherhood have been forged. In the course of this experience we have evolved a set of traditional principles by which we live and work together and relate ourselves as a fellowship to the world around us. These principles are called "The 12 Traditions

of Alcoholics Anonymous". They represent the distilled experience of our past, and we rely on them to carry us in unity through the challenges and dangers which the future may bring."
    -Bill W. AA Comes of Age pg 79

- **Tradition One:**
  Worldwide unity. How is MY Home group affecting the unity of AA as a whole and even other service structures? Are we encouraging members from other countries to make our group their home group instead of becoming part of their own service structure? Are we taking physical and monetary contributions from those whose own service structure needs their participation? Are we taking other countries' service structures into consideration?
  "*most A.A. members have found it important to belong to ONE group that they call their "home group." This is THE group (not one of the groups) where they accept service responsibilities... And although all A.A. members are usually welcome at all groups and feel at home at any of these meetings, the concept of the home group has still remained the strongest bond between the A.A. member and the Fellowship. With membership comes the right to vote on issues that might affect the group and might also affect A.A. as a whole — a process that forms the very cornerstone of A.A.'s service structure. As with all group conscience matters, each A.A. member has one vote and this is voiced through the home group"*
  -AA Group Pamphlet https://www.aa.org/assets/en_US/p-16_theaagroup.pdf

- **Tradition Two:**
  The group conscience is the collective conscience of the **group membership** *(not the meeting attendees)* and thus represents substantial unanimity on an issue before definitive action is taken. This is achieved by the **group members** *(not meeting attendees)* through the sharing of _full information_, individual points of view, and the practice of A.A. principles. To be fully informed requires a willingness to listen to minority opinions with an open mind. On sensitive issues, the group works slowly — discouraging formal motions until a clear sense of its collective view emerges. Placing principles before personalities, the membership is wary of dominant opinions. Its voice is heard when a _well-informed_ group arrives at a decision. The result rests on more than a "yes" or "no" count — precisely because it is the spiritual expression of the group conscience. **The term "informed group conscience" implies that pertinent information has been studied** and all views have been heard before the group votes.
  -Page 28 AA Group Pamphlet

- **Tradition Three:**
  "*Some A.A.s come together as specialized A.A. groups — for men, women, young people, doctors, gays and others. If the members are all alcoholics, and if they open the door to all alcoholics who seek help, regardless of profession, gender or other distinction, and meet all the other aspects defining an A.A. group, they may call themselves an A.A. group.*"

-Page 12 AA Group pamphlet

The primary purpose of any A.A. group is to carry the A.A. message to alcoholics. Experience with alcohol is one thing all A.A. members have in common. It is misleading to hint or give the impression that A.A. solves other problems or knows what to do about drug addiction.
-Page 18 AA Group pamphlet

Billy N.
<mark>Notes not taken.</mark>

Dee G.
<mark>Notes not taken.</mark>

Craig W.
10th Tradition
- Is safety an outside issue? Is racism an outside issue? Is inclusivity an outside issue? All relative in any A.A. room, virtual or not. There was a time when we were going to put the Big Book on an electronic platform and folks were worried that the ads on the platform were affiliation, however hard copy books sit in stores right next to all kinds of other books that are not A.A., in stores that are not A.A.
- Are we an in-person organization? Going back to safety…How many face-to-face conventions, workshops or AA groups do you think got our members sick from Covid, severely ill from Covid or died from Covid? I can cite just in my own personal experience more than one dead is too much and there was way more than that…and the list of generally sick or severely ill is uncertain. How many of the alcoholics whose lives we are always yelling we need to save, we need to help, have we helped if they are not safe? If we are not protecting them? Not opposed to in-person meetings during pandemic but we can certainly have these discussions for the common welfare and it not be an outside issue.
- How many A.A. members do you think got sick, severely ill or died from Covid from attending a phone or online group? Big Book says outward appearances are not inward reality at all. We had groups by me that were meeting while there was a lockdown and guess what? They made the news--in those cases we brought the AA name into public controversy.

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- When we discuss all these topics in AA we heal, get well, become more open-minded, inclusive and alcoholics get sober. Is wearing a shirt at an in-person meeting different than a religious or political virtual platform banner????
- If we outreach on social media from our personal account and there is non-AA stuff on there--which there is almost guaranteed to be--do we view it as an opportunity to practice principles before personalities or is it a turn off because of many outside issues?

11ᵗʰ Tradition

- CARRY THE MESSAGE and use the principle of anonymity...In a letter from the 1960s Bill says clearly there is no room for interpretation on two principles: Step 1 and Tradition 11--Step 1 is 100% sober and anonymity is 100% at the public level.
- If we have forums and post full faces is that in the spirit of our Traditions? IF we ask if someone is an AA member is that enough? Is it private? Even if it is, we should post for the new-to-the-traditions member why there are full faces so they are not confused.
- Sensational advertisements on the digital platform. What's the norm now? What is the tone/mode? Is spamming a professional every week normal? Is that sensational?
- Sometimes we purchase a list of professionals, it's not unheard of but is it the AA way to send them email blasts or find a way to work with them one on one, or perhaps anonymity protected How to Videos…
- Speaking of which there is not an issue in AA you couldn't put in a cheap, effective simple How-to video at a district, area, intergroup/central office and the GSO/AA Grapevine. For example how to register a group, how to participate in a business meeting, what is anonymity...etc.etc Carry the message and use the principle of anonymity.

12ᵗʰ Tradition

- At every level of AA activity is our public relations approach marked by humility, sacrifice, faith and generosity? Or is pride over AA working in our lives, demand for CONTROLLING how AA is viewed publicly, self-will, competition with other recovery approaches, and a "self-centered" sort of promotion having influence over approaches and decisions?
- Having let's say a nonalcoholic drug addict or gambler is not just about them now- it's about the future of AA and the long-range vision of what will slowly erode and crumble because of our own short-range vision, which is not usually grounded in our spiritual principles.
- Need to be careful of Big Shotism, which can be worse in the digital realm: sustain anonymity in service, work hard to train our successors in leadership so it's a "we" thing not an "I" thing.
- Principles before personalities means we also don't leave ourselves out because we are afraid of what people will think when we speak up.

Concept 12: Vital Principles for Effective Teamwork

Buck R.

You can email Buck R. at buckp54@delawareaa.org to get a copy of his PowerPoint slideshow.

How will Online Groups have their voices heard?

Jennifer B.

Experience of 71st General Service Conference from one current delegate.
Upside-down triangle - Groups on top, connect through GSRs to district, area delegates, and conference. The more participation we have from the groups, the better the conference can act for AA as a whole.

Two advisory actions approved by 71st GSC:
First, that the U.S./Canada General Service Structure recognize online groups and encourage their participation, listing those groups who ask to be listed within the group's preferred district and area, with the default option being the location of the group's primary contact.
Second, that the General Service Board will form a committee to explore future possibilities for the participation of online groups.
"Let's not be the Conference that fails to recognize online groups after meeting online all year."
Spiritual principle of Concept IV - all of us deeply desire to belong. More questions than answers. We will get it figured out.
So what we have now is a measure for immediate inclusion, while the working group established by GSO and others explore how we might best incorporate online groups into the structure going forward.

GSO assigns the numbers for groups, but it's up to districts and areas to recognize the GSRs the groups elect. Registrar can be a thankless job -- herding cats. Data stewardship is so important, but anonymous alcoholics don't make it easy. Keep your info updated at all levels and be patient and kind as we navigate these changes.

Areas are autonomous. Per our Conference Charter, delegates are free to decide what they take to the groups, and how groups have their voices heard varies by area (gave examples).
"One member, one vote."

What worked, what didn't and where do we go from here?
Online group participation is working fine in Area 06 currently, but as they shift back to meeting in person, it's not known if each District or even the Area will be able to provide a good hybrid option to include members who may not be able to attend in person.

Knows of at least one other area actively talking about creating a virtual district within their area.
* Post-workshop note: Area 72 just passed a motion to create a virtual district within their Area.*

While many online groups support the idea of a virtual area, she has heard from some who would prefer a geographic tie so they can have a say in local matters.

Members who might otherwise have felt uncomfortable, or downright unsafe, in physical meeting rooms near them have found their tribe in specialized online groups. As a result, some groups that used to meet in person are planning to stay online to support their fellow transgender members, for example. There are so many reasons that belonging to an online group might work better for some AA members—and some have been doing it for years. It's an access issue. And those members might not have their voices heard any other way.

Full presentation available: delegate.p71@cnca06.org

Gayle F.

Member of Global Eye Opener Group and part of a working group who submitted a proposal for virtual areas and districts.

- Suggested virtual Districts according to time zones.
- How can virtual Area get kick started? Take this to your virtual group.
- Network with other online groups. Let your voice be heard.

Detailed proposal available: gayle@fortc.com

Jeff B.

One online group's journey