Creating and Running a Successful Online Discussion Forum in AA

A brief description of what your attendees will take home with them. What will they be able to report back to their district/area/intergroup and possibly implement there?

> Our goal is to:
> 1. Explain the utility of an online forum - in general and as pertains to AA specifically
> 2. Discuss options about how to set up and build a successful forum
> 3. Offer suggestions as to "next steps" toward setting up an AA discussion forum

Discussion Forum Session:
People are social animals - part of our basic instinct.
Our AA culture and tradition values meetings, fellowship, groups
All individuals are encouraged to share their experience, strength, hope in the fellowship in an (ideally) democratic manner

While considering doing a forum
1. What is the purpose of your discussion forum?
2. Who will be using the forum?
   a. US or international?
3. Who will be members of the forum?
   a. AA members?
      i. Specific topical areas...
   b. General public?
4. Will the forum be private (login only) or public?
   a. Public
      i. Will each member's' anonymity be protected?
      ii. What information is shared between members?
      iii. Will any part of the forum be public?
         1. If not, what attracts people to the forum?
   b. Private
      i. How will new members find it and gain access?
      ii. Member (user) administration?
      iii. Authentication policy?
      iv. Rules of...
5. Will topics and discussions be open or moderated?
   a. Policy statement and enforcement...
6. Will some topics be private? If so, who will be the gatekeeper?
7. Who will be responsible for setting up the forum initially?
8. Who will administer (software updates, fix problems, deal with changes, answer member's questions etc.) the forum?
9. How will decisions about policy and direction of the forum be made?
10. How will it be paid for?

Best bet is to have discussions about this with others. (Try thoughts out on an existing forum. Look for similar minded folks in your group. Drink lots of coffee. Talk to your sponsor.)

High level:
1. Create a new forum or a "room|group|channel" on an existing forum?
2. Look for a hosted solution or...

      3.   ...roll your own?

Getting started:
1. If you wish to create a new forum, who will the initial members be?
2. How will you grow the forum from that point?
3. What is a target number for members? Active members?

Your steering/admin/moderation team:
1. People who can back you up
2. People who can encourage you

Money:
1. Who pays initially?
2. Ongoing costs
    a. Domain name
    b. Forum service or hosting+email+???
3. 7th tradition perspectives

What's involved - setting up your own hosted board:
1. Select forum software/environment
    a. Many options available (roughly in order of popularity on web)
        i. vBulletin (purchase software or service)
        ii. XenForo (purchase software)
        iii. SimpleMacheinesForum - SMF (Open Source - free license)
        iv. phpBB (Open Source - free license)
        v. bbPress, BuddyPress (WordPress plugins)
        vi. Discourse (OpenSource or service)
2. Initial setup
    a. Naming
        i. Domain acquisition
    b. Service signup
        i. How does your forum fit within the vanilla offered service?
    c. Hosting
        i. Decide on hosting service
        ii. Email
            1. Outgoing email from the forum
            2. Incoming email to the forum
        iii. Initial installation
3. Seed topics
    a. People want to join an active forum
4. Signing up members
5. Support
    a. User administration
    b. Moderation
    c. Software updates

What's involved - using a hosted forum:
1. Determine type of partner

       a. Program or general
       b. Preferred platform technology
           i. Whole forum instance
           ii. Subforum or category
2. Select hosting partner
       a. AA/recovery
       b. Non-AA
           i. Discourse
           ii. vBulletin
3. Set topics/Seed discussions