

Southern Minnesota Area Assembly
Area 36

Technology Guidelines

2013

SCOPE

Since its earliest days, Alcoholics Anonymous has used every technology at its disposal to carry the message to the still suffering alcoholic. In the beginning it was simply print media and radio. As our society matured, and technology expanded and improved, we continued to make use of any means available to continue our battle to provide AA's life saving message.

Therefore, we believe we should set forth, for future trusted servants, some guidelines by which they may chart their course for continuing to communicate our message to those who still suffer. We hope to provide in these guidelines our sense of how AA's principles might be applied to the use of technology. We realize that technology will continue to expand and improve, and our best effort is to merely point the way; leaving our future servants to determine the best course for their time and technology.

SECTION I – HARDWARE

Lifecycle of hardware

We suggest the following as the minimum number of years before replacement. This does not factor in operating system changes or failures, which may call for a modification of these timelines.

- Laptops – A minimum of 4 years use before replacement
- Printers – A minimum of 4 years use before replacement
- Desktop computers – A minimum of 6 years use before replacement
- Projectors – A minimum of 8 years use before replacement
 - Bulbs – As needed
- Monitors – As needed
- Audio Equipment – As needed

Replacement Timing

In considering the replacement timing of hardware, it is important to consider both the functionality of the item and the budgetary impact.

- A staggered approach we think to be the best, allowing for providing good hardware for servants while providing for fiscal prudence

Manufacturer & Model

This consideration is focused on ensuring that servants have the most widely used equipment types with which they will most likely be familiar - the goal being minimal learning impact on servants.

- For computers the current suggestion is for a PC/Windows based system
- We do not make any recommendation relative to printers

- Ideally, these purchases will be reviewed prior to purchase by the Technology Committee (formerly the Web Committee)

Request/Approval Process

It is vital to understand the 'who & how' of software upgrades. Who can request an upgrade and how is the approval accomplished?

- A request to upgrade hardware can come from anyone, and should be directed to the Technologist for review
- After review, the Technologist discusses this with the Technology Chair to determine budget funds availability
- Should the funds be in the Technology Budget/Fund, the Technology Committee Chairs approves/disapproves the purchase
- Should the funds not be available, the Technology Committee Chair will discuss with the Technology Committee whether to request additional funds from the Area Assembly

Purchase Process

As we develop a need for more software, this purchase process will become more important since the trend for software licensing appears to be moving toward subscriptions

- It is recommended that the Technologist be provided with a Debit Card (as the Area Chair current is) in order to make these purchases, deal with download practices and subscriptions
- It is also recommended that the Area Budget include a Technology Budget/Fund that can accumulate savings for future purchases

Support Services

Due to what might be considered "light use" of the hardware, it is felt that the Technologist can provide Support Services, with reimbursement for their travel. In the event this exceeds that servant's capability or capacity, service can be purchased on an "as needed" basis.

SECTION II – SOFTWARE / DIGITAL SERVICES

Vendor(s)

While it may seem to be the best course, purchasing the 'cheapest' version of needed software can often lead to future difficulties. Therefore, we believe it best to deal with reputable vendors for mainstream products for as prudent a price as possible.

- Current vendors are:
 - Microsoft – MS Office Suite (all computers)
 - Adobe – In-Design & Dreamweaver (Newsletter & Website)
 - Filemaker – Filemaker Database (Corrections and Group Records)
 - Current preferred software vendor is TechSoup.com, which provides software at reduced prices to non-profit agencies

- Future vendor / software selections to be determined by discussion between Technologist and user, with final decision by Technology Committee Chair

Ownership Type

Currently the trend is to move from purchase of software to subscriptions. Each approach has its advantages and liabilities. The decision will likely best be made on a case-by-case basis, between the Technologist and Technology Committee Chair

- Current ownership is of both varieties

Software Upgrade Frequency

Operating system upgrades, hardware upgrades or user needs can trigger upgrading software. These factors, individually or collectively, can influence the frequency of upgrading our software.

- The preferred frequency of needed upgrades should occur at the time of a hardware (computer) replacement if at all possible

Request/Approval Process

It is vital to understand the 'who & how' of software upgrades. Who can request an upgrade and how is the approval accomplished?

- See Hardware Request / Approval Process

Support Services

Due to what might be considered "light use" of the hardware, it is felt that the Technologist can provide Support Services, with reimbursement for their travel. In the event this exceeds that servant's capability or capacity, service can be purchased on an "as needed" basis.

ADDITIONAL RECOMMENDATIONS/CONSIDERATIONS

1. These guidelines are provided with the understanding that the Area Finance Committee will recommend the following to the Area Assembly:
 - a. The creation of a Technology Fund in which to save funds for future purchases
 - b. An additional line item be added to the Area Budget that will identify the amount and frequency of funds 'saved' into the Technology Fund
 - c. That an additional Debit Card be issued to the Technologist for purchases
 - d. That a procedure be included in the Financial Policy to provide a 'checks & balance' for this additional card
2. These guidelines are also provided with the understanding that the Area Structure Committee will recommend the following to the Area Assembly:
 - a. The change of the Web Committee to the Technology Committee
 - b. The change of the Webmaster position to the Technologist position
 - c. The addition of the Audio Person to the Technology Committee, reporting to the Technology Committee Chair
 - d. An addition to the Trusted Servant Guidelines for the Audio Person position
 - e. An update of the Webmaster duties in the Trusted Servant Guidelines as provided by the Technology Committee to the Structure Committee for their review and completion
 - f. An update of the Technology Committee Chairperson duties in the Trusted Servant Guidelines as provided by the Technology Committee to the Structure Committee for their review and completion