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Trustee Line for August 2008

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From The Trustees

The subjects listed below are just a listing of themes that have been submitted by other Trustees. You may respond to any of them or start an entirely new subject

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Submit a response to the [Trustee Line](#) because of something you have read in this or any other issue.

Deer in the Headlights

8/5/08 - 9:27 AM

As we approach the Houston conference, I have given much thought to what we the returning Trustees, whomever we are, will do differently to make the new Trustees feel less intimidated at their first Trustee meeting. In doing a quick headcount from the Confidential Trustee Listing that was just distributed this past weekend, I come up with over 40 new first time Trustees and about a dozen who were previously Trustees and are Trustees once again after a brief rest period in between terms.

When I first became a Trustee in Montreal '00 and walked into the Trustee meeting room for the first time, I thought my heart was going to explode because of how excited I was. After thinking about that a little more, it was more about the absolute fear I had of not knowing what was going to happen. All I received as far as advice from the other Trustees from my area was 'Just follow what we do and you will be okay.'

Well, I am here to say that hearing that was entirely insufficient. Few of the Trustees from my area spoke about anything on that agenda and what I was left with was trying to figure out how to vote on each item and being a sponge for procedures that were initially as foreign to me as speaking Russian. I wanted to get up to the microphone and talk about what I felt and actually did so. But I had no idea about what the procedures were that were eligible to be exercised in the meeting. I heard things that were unusual and looked around for someone to challenge that procedure and for the most part saw no one react the same as me. There was no chance that I was going to initiate a challenge, because I felt that I didn't want to make a fool out of myself. Why should I have been made to feel that way? The answer is that none of the Trustees should be feeling anything like that to begin with.

The front table was very cordial and comforting with their reassuring statements of how they would answer any questions we has about procedures. The fact of the matter was that I felt as though I had been placed in a dark room with no idea where the door was. The bottom line is that the new Trustees have always been thrown into the deep end of the pool and are expected to swim. What has ended up happening every 2 years at the first Trustee meeting after the Trustee elections was to have many of the Trustees just sit there and vote without feeling comfortable to engage themselves 100% into the meeting.

As of Portland this past April, we made a huge stride to change all that. The BOT passed

the Rules and Procedures document, which is a strong beginning to the process of enlightenment for the new and old Trustees alike. No doubt this does much to take some of the anxiety out of the first meeting, but it is only a start.

Our Chairman, Tom M. has authorized a series of orientation conference calls designed to help the new Trustees past any pre-meeting jitters. They will be held in an open forum for any questions pertaining to the Trustee meeting that will be answered by Tom and his two Co-Chairs Richie S and Herb B. Of course any Trustee is invited to be part of the process if for nothing else than a 'meeting refresher'. The schedule is expected to be held at 2 different dates and 2 different days at each of those 2 dates to try and accommodate everyone's schedule. The announcements of those dates will be sent to all Trustees with email.

Having said that, my thoughts go toward what else we can do for the new Trustees. This is hopefully the beauty of the Trustee Line because I hope it will elicit some commentary and suggestions about how others felt as new Trustees, what they did to overcome their initial anxieties and what suggestions they have to embrace our new Trustee brothers and sisters.

Anyone care to respond?

David M. - Area 12, North Jersey

8/5/08 - 3:55 PM

I remember very clearly my first trustee meeting as a member of the Board. I had attended two previous conferences but sat only briefly in the Trustee meeting room on both occasions. All I remembered was that a few trustees were more "vocal" than others, although not always right in their statements.

That first meeting, as a trustee, was in 1999 in San Diego. Our area had held an election the month before to replace a trustee who had to resign and I had been elected, not having a clue of what to do or what to really expect. So here I am, in San Diego, after a rough flight. To me, all flights are rough because I just hate to fly. And Air Canada had lost my luggage, which ended up in Denver and were finally delivered to the hotel on Friday night.

My first move in San Diego was to ask an experienced past trustee from our Area what I should do to be a good trustee. He told me to speak as little as possible because if I went to the microphone too often, then, after a while, nobody would care anymore about what I had to say. I easily bought that because I had no intention at all to stand up in front of all these people and make a fool of myself. I was petrified, even though I spent my whole professional career working with the public. I was even forgetting that I was able to speak English, even with an accent. I had several questions crossing my mind during the meeting but never once stand up and asked. Things have changed since, didn't they?

I had survived my first trustee meeting but had gathered some experience for the next meeting. I realised that I had to prepare thoroughly, review the agenda several times, discuss agenda items with experienced members in my area, refer to our literature in case of doubt and not be afraid to ask questions if need be. Remember, there is no such thing as a dumb question.

I truly believe that the Rules and Procedures Manual will be a tremendous asset to help new trustees as will the orientation conferences. Another thing that would help a lot is for experienced trustees to kind of "sponsor" a new trustee. What I mean by that is to approach a new trustee, not necessarily someone from our own area, and offer him/her help before, during or after the meeting, even offer to sit close in the meeting room and help if needed. This is what I plan to do in Houston. Some areas have only one trustee and this trustee could be newly elected. I know he/she will feel lost in the large meeting room, might need help but will be too afraid or shy to ask.

Nothing can replace human contact. I know it saved my life when I joined Gamblers Anonymous and, to this day, I remember that in San Diego, a member welcomed me with a big hug when I told him I was a new trustee and another one gave me his GA coin after I told him I was very nervous going into the meeting.

I still have that coin.

André G. - Area 5B - Montreal, Quebec

8/5/08 - 11:05 PM

Dear Trustees:

A message to the new trustees - 'GET YOUR FEET WET.' Don't be afraid to get up to the microphone and state how you are thoughts on a topic. Your remarks could sway how another member votes on an issue. All the new trustees bring new ideas, new thoughts and new experiences that the old trustees could learn from. You are the voice of your area; participate in every discussion! When I came to my trustee meeting, the chairman of the day encouraged all new trustees to speak and I did speak lot at my first conferences! 'GET INVOLVED AND BE OF SERVICE!!!'

Richard C. - Area 2A

What is a meeting Anyway?

8/12/08 - 2:35 AM

I have been asked many times about why we cannot use conference books or conference workshops at meetings, and my response is always the same, 'because it is not GA approved or appropriate literature'. Recently someone then retorted that 'if it's not GA approved or appropriate then how come it can be used at a conference?'. Is a workshop at a conference not a GA meeting? If it is a GA meeting then why are people making up workshops and using those and not just using GA literature. Do we not have enough good stuff in GA literature to pull workshops out of there? If the stuff people are using for workshop is so good then why isn't it submitted as GA literature? Maybe we need to put together a booklet of GA approved workshops. On the other hand if a conference workshop is not a GA meeting then someone please explain to me what the definition of a GA meeting is. I searched the entire Guidance Code and found nothing that defines a meeting. Bob W. sited to me the part of the Guidance Code under groups that says whenever two or more people meet on a regularly weekly scheduled..... But this is the definition of a group not a meeting. Either we use only GA literature or we do not let's make up our minds. Please someone help me to better understand so I can give my constituents an answer.

Yours in recovery,
Matt H. - Area 16

8/18/08 - 2:26 PM

To my fellow Trustee,

Many of us in San Diego have been wrestling with your posting regarding "What is a Meeting anyway?" I have been told by my elders that whenever two or more people get together on a regularly scheduled weekly basis - this can be called a "meeting." If you accept that premise, then a workshop at a conference would not fit that definition. Personally, I attend workshops to (1) expand my knowledge of the program, (2) to gain knowledge of issues on which I feel I don't have enough information; (3) to hear other opinions on issues; (4) to hear speakers in whom I have great respect and (5) to stay open-minded to become a stronger member. I do not attend workshops (1) to give therapy, (2) to hear therapy, although that may unexpectedly happen. Should I feel I need a "meeting" during a conference, I can attend a candlelight meeting if one is offered, a women's meeting if one is offered, or the traditional 24-hour therapy room. In all the conferences I have attended, I do not recall any "handouts" being passed out at these "meetings." I also look forward to getting handouts at the workshops because they may enlighten me and provide me with something to mull over, it may contain information one specific member from my area may be desperately looking for, etc. Since all handouts are supposed to be approved at the board level before a conference, it has been my opinion that these handouts then become (by board approval) "appropriate" literature.

In the yellow combo book, paragraph 1, the third sentence says, "They began to meet regularly and as the months passed neither had returned to gambling." And on page 17, item 1, "Attend as many meetings as possible, but at least one full meeting per week." I think the key word or the inference is "regularly." In the "Information Packet," on page 1, four criteria for starting a group are listed; item 3 indicates "Meeting room should be available every week on the scheduled meeting night." In "Hosting an International Conference" on page 2. under Requirements, #5 advises "Sufficient breakout rooms for workshops, therapy rooms" indicating that workshops and therapy rooms are different.

I don't know if this addresses your concerns, but I wanted to share my opinion and some other opinions from San Diego,

In the spirit, Linda S. - Area 3A, San Diego

8/25/08 - 6:43 PM

Hello my fellow past/present Trustees,

In response to a quote by Linda S.:
Since all handouts are supposed to be approved at the board level before a conference, it has been my opinion that these handouts then become (by board approval) "appropriate" literature.

I believe this statement could be interpreted incorrectly. A conference committee (Mini or International) is made up of chairpeople, one of which is workshop chairperson. That individual is responsible for organizing the volunteers who put on the workshops. Presumably this individual is knowledgeable enough on where to draw the line on what is acceptable workshop content. In other words we would all be applled if they allowed a workshop on how to handicap. Right?

With that said, the workshop chairperson DOES NOT submit the workshop content to any "board" (i.e. Board of Regents or Board of Trustees) for approval.

I wanted to make this distinction since Linda used the terms "board", "approval" and

"appropriate". Using these terms in the context of workshops would indicate the Board of Regents or the Board of Trustees (the only two "boards" in Gamblers Anonymous International that I am aware of) are reviewing workshop content for every Mini or International workshop.

I just wanted to be clear that this is not the case as I understand it. And I did not want any Trustee (present or past) or G.A. member to be under an incorrect assumption based upon Linda's quoted statement.

Further, I believe that a workshop, a potluck dinner on a non-scheduled meeting day or once-a-month step study meeting in my home are not "meetings" by the definition of the Guidance Code. I believe that all of these events would still be handled by individuals that would not let the principals and spirit of the GA program be diluted.

Lastly, I believe that the term "group" and "meeting" are fully interchangeable.

If I have missed the mark I welcome criticism and/or correction.

With Serenity,
Ed K. - Area 1 Trustee

8/28/08 - 10:33 AM

Good morning, fellow Trustees

To Ed K - thank you for the clarification. Perhaps I was too glib - and certainly don't want this to become a question of semantics.

On page 7 of the "Hosting an International Conference" in the paragraph describing the functions and "how to" for Workshops, the second to the last sentence reads: "Remember, all material or handouts must be pre-approved by a vice-chairperson of the Board of Trustees or his/her delegate." It was to this action item that I referred. When San Diego hosted one of these conferences a few years, I recall that we had to submit all of our workshop materials to the "board." I think my error was one of brevity, certainly not meant to mislead. As I said - thanks for the clarification. See you in Houston.

In the spirit, Linda S. - Area 3A, San Diego

Can GA and Gam-anon run a joint phone system?

8/12/08 - 3:07 AM

This is something that has also come up in my area recently and the chairperson of my inter-group asked me to turn to other Trustees for guidance. If I refer to the Guidance Code it is not clear. Unity Step 6 says 'Gamblers Anonymous ought never endorse finance or lend the Gamblers Anonymous name to any related facility or outside enterprise...'. Is Gam Anon not an outside enterprise? Furthermore if we do indeed let them be part of our phone system can we accept \$ from them? Would that not be accepting an outside contribution? As I have heard many areas run combined phone systems and I'd like to get a feel you ra opinions on this. In the 'Past Trustee Decisions' reference guide on page 23, section 4, item 20, it states 'Board consensus is that it is not appropriate for Gamblers Anonymous and Gam-Anon to jointly run a Telephone Answering Service. (Orlando 1998)' Is this still the consensus?

Matt H. - Area 16

8/19/08 - 2:28 PM

I believe that Gam-Anon 'could possibly' be part of a joint phone system; however, there is a qualifier to my statement. Under the current structure of our Fellowship, we are being dishonest about how we handle Gam-Anon. Yes, I specifically used that word, because we are supposed to be a program of honesty. Gam-Anon is absolutely an outside entity, irrespective of the successful experience many member have had with their association with Gam-Anon and any alignment of common goals between our 2 Fellowships. The fact remains that we continue to embrace Gam-Anon and involve ourselves with it on an ongoing basis in direct opposition to our Unity Steps. Look no further than GA giving 45% of the gross profits from our semi-annual conference profits to Gam-Anon. GA and Gam-Anon sponsored mini-conference and other events. But this is not just about money. What we need to do is to change the Steps to reflect our acceptance of Gam-Anon, rather than lie about it and tip-toe around the issue with rationalizations that jointly we can better hold the families of compulsive gamblers together for the good of the compulsive gambler who is still suffering. We reference the Gam-Anon website on the ISO website, which is deemed to be approved literature. Our literature is riddled with references to Gam-Anon, but never deals with the conflict that this association brings with it.

I have personally benefitted from Gam-Anon from my early days in the program almost 20 years ago. I don't believe I would still be in the Fellowship if I were allowed to think and conduct myself in the manner I did when I first came in. It was with the very strong help of Gam-Anon that I was able to genuinely begin my recovery. Having said that, I have voted against listing the Gam-Anon website link on our NJ Intergroup website. I have also voted against expanding more information to be available to members regarding Gam-Anon from the GA side. I do this strictly on a principles basis.

If we got serious and more importantly honest with ourselves, and admitted that we are in fact heavily aligned with Gam-Anon, then by all means, the answer to the question is an overwhelming yes to running a joint telephone system and a whole lot more involvement with GA. The reality is that changing any part of any step in our Recovery or Unity programs would require an act of God and at last check, I don't believe he's a GA member.

David M. - Area 12 - New Jersey

8/21/08 - 4:28 PM

Dear Trustees and fellow GA members,

I read with interest David M's response to Matt's letter in the Trustee Line and I must say I agree almost entirely with David's assessment. The only area that I disagree with is that I believe we can still put Gamanon on the system without violating the Unity Program. My feeling is that anything that can help the Compulsive Gambler without totally violating step 6 of the Unity Program is OK. Having a link to GamAnon would not only help the Compulsive Gambler but also help the family. What could be better? To make things totally OK would only take a Trustee to make a slight change in step 6. I believe the following would work and be acceptable to most if not all. I'm sure many of you will think what does he mean by not totally violating step 6. Of course it's a violation but lets face it many of us have violated the steps in one way or another and just looked the other way. I just believe this is a necessary violation that should be overlooked.

New Step 6-Gamblers Anonymous ought never endorse (except GamAnon),finance or lend the Gamblers Anonymous name to any related facility or outside enterprise, lest problems of money, property and prestige divert us from our primary purpose.

Our primary purpose is the Compulsive Gambler and the above statement would definately help the Compulsive Gambler. Lets just quit fooling ourselves and step up to bat and do the right thing.

Bob W. - Area 1

Agenda item 25

8/12/08 3:51 PM

I, too, would like to weigh in on Agenda Item 25. While I may not always respond with a written word, I do read every single word. I believe being "informed" is one of the best tools I can bring to the BOT meetings. I may not always agree with what is being stated, but the thought process and information does provide me with the "other side of the coin." Often I have met with other members in San Diego in order to get their opinions on issues, and we frequently ask each other, "what do you think they meant by this?" Having the opportunity to review other opinions provides me with more clues, ideas and opinions and a far better information base on which way to cast my vote at the meetings. I have found that often I have changed my original opinion, and voted differently than had originally planned.

To remove this tool may create longer lines at the microphone and possibly might force me to vote on a "spur of the moment" impulse, rather than having the time to think and reflect on what the intent of the original presenter of information really was. I would hate to see us lose this valuable tool. Perhaps that is why it was time for me to write - there are no coincidences.

Linda S. - Area 3A, San Diego

Public Relations help

8/12/08 9:12 PM

Dear GA Brothers and Sisters,

I am writing this letter on behalf of the Public Relations committee. In Portland we submitted a new piece of literature on the Do's and Don'ts of how to work public relations. Everything in this pamphlet followed the guidelines of the Gamblers Anonymous guidance code. We did not feel at this time that our work was done. As a committee we want to help all the areas with public relations.

This committee is asking for trustees to seek out in their areas some of the different ways members are working public relations. We would like to hear what your area is or has done that works really well. We are trying to compile numerous different ways of doing public relations. Our committee will then try to utilize this information to better serve GA as a whole.

I understand that each area most likely has a PR chairperson that might not be a trustee. I am giving you all permission to pass along my cell number or email to this person, so that they may contact me personally to assist with the information. My email and cell number is current on the confidential trustee listing.

Thank you all for your assistance and I look forward to seeing everyone in Houston.

General comments

8/22/08 10:18 AM
Greetings to all-

I'm looking forward to the Houston conference, attending as a past Trustee and excited that the BOT will have quite a few new faces and voices!!

In reviewing the past few submissions to the Trustee Line (which I feel is tragically under-utilized by both past and current Trustees), I did want to state that I agreed with Bob W's proposed change to the Unity Step 6. Bob, I have not seen it placed on the Houston agenda and there are only two days left...I hope that you will submit this item as soon as possible, because it will allow Gam-anon to contribute to a joint use of the Hotline (which would currently violate Unity Step Seven) nor it will THEN violate the part of .Unity Step Six to encourage family members of gamblers to reach out to Gam-Anon when talking to volunteers on the hotline (as in endorsing the services of Gam-Anon). That being said, it might be better to have two additional agenda items on the Houston agenda- One for addressing Step Six and one for Step Seven, similar to your proposed version in the Trustee Line.

I also wanted to use this forum to explain an item that I submitted for the Houston agenda today. It is a proposal to eliminate the last sentence of #3, you guessed it, page 17. I have been attending BOT conferences since the fall of 2003 (first as a member, then as a Trustee, now as a past Trustee) and it was a bone of contention for me anytime an item appeared with regard to page 17. We all know that page 17 is so important, to both the new and the old member. Everytime an item came up to bold or capitalize a portion of this page...well, it just left me kind of scratching my head. Let's just get a jump on the next few conferences and agenda items and just bold and capitalize the entire page! Seriously, I would be content to see normal text and no one particular sentence in capitals and bold letters, except for the all-important sentence on that page: DONT GAMBLE FOR ANYTHING! Which brings me to my point....I know...Ask me the time and I may try to tell you how to build the watch. I have submitted an item suggesting that we eliminate the 'list' of things that follow the current sentence of DONT GAMBLE FOR ANYTHING. My thought on this is to follow the thinking of the gambler...If a particular activity is not listed and itemized as part of page 17, then it must be okay. For example, the author of the original page 17, #3 failed to include other activities that we know are gambling, but does that mean it's okay because it's not included in the list. Items such as calling in to radio contests for dinner tickets, concert tickets or how about the enticing flyer from the local car dealer to bring the key you just received on the flyer and see if it will start that new 2009 Toyota (such as the flyer I got in the mail yesterday). Oh, and what about the less-obvious ploys of companies, such as Home Depot and Lowe's that put a code number on your purchase receipt and it states...participate in our customer survey using this code and have a chance to win a \$5000 gift card.

Now, for those nay-sayers out there reading this (if you're still reading this), put yourself in the shoes and head of a newcomer!!! I'm telling you that this is the one thing that I hear over and over from newer members (and some not so new)....Well, if it's not addressed in this list, then maybe it's okay to participate once in awhile in these little radio call-in's or the television news' channels that have their little 'office or birthday' gigs. As a gambler, I can tell you that I could sniff out a giveaway, a freebie, justify any action....all in the name of a chance to win!

Enough said, but I hope that this item will stir up some thoughts and discussions with you and your constituents. More importantly, I hope that by explaining my reasoning behind this agenda item (ahead of time), that I will be able to get a current Trustee to step up and make this motion for me in Houston.

Best regards and thanks for your patience in reading through my message to the end-
Karen L. - Past Trustee, Area 3

8/28/08 - 11:19 AM
Good morning, Karen L.

I applaud your effort. I know this "bold" business may be a nuisance to some of our trustees, however, in San Diego it has become an important tool. In many meetings, when we get to Page 17 in the Combo Book, one person is chosen to begin the reading, but the ENTIRE group in attendance participates in reading the BOLD printed words. I truly believe it helps to reinforce what is so important to all gamblers, and particularly the new-to-the-program gamblers. With so much information to retain at their first meeting - if they only retain what is written in BOLD print, I believe it is enormously helpful in getting them to their second meeting without gambling. I wish you success on your agenda item.

Linda S - Area 3A, San Diego

Feedback for Dina P.

8/22/08 11:06 AM

I would like to comment on Dina's submission to the trustee line of April 22, 2008. I have had a similar experience regarding donations. At two of our meetings in our area, I heard the treasurer mention "we received \$20 from Gamanon" today. I was in shock, I asked why are we taking donations from Gamanon? I was told they help us pay rent. I explained to them that a donation from them is considered an outside donation and should not be accepted. The trusted servants at both of these meetings told me "we have done this for years", I said that does not make it right. I was frustrated and told them Gamanon should make their own arrangement and pay their own rent, I felt alone on this issue. I was happy to read on the trustee line that I am not alone with my opinion. I think this is not even an issue up for discussion, it is a violation of Unity step 7 and should not take place.

As per Dina's situation, it was different, that meeting sounds like it is a combined meeting. Got me thinking, we also have a successful meeting here that is a combined meeting attended by many couples. This meeting is on our meeting list and on the ISO website. At this meeting, we read from Ga AND Gamanon literature, and members from both fellowships are allowed to share. This is another violation of our Guidance Code, under definition of Groups. Article VII, Section 1. So, maybe, this meeting should be removed from the meeting list, because it does not qualify as a GA meeting, I think. I would like to get some input from other trustees regarding this issue. Maybe I am wrong. I just need some feedback.

I would also like to welcome all the new trustees, and say thank you to the outgoing trustees. I am looking forward to serving another term as trustee from Area 1 and will strive to do the best that I can.

Sincerely,
Ara H. - Area 1

[Note from the website admin:](#) Ara, my apologies for missing your submission, which you originally submitted on July 7th. I am at a loss to explain how it was missed in the roughly 5,000 emails I get each day. For everyone who submits items to the Trustee Line, keep in mind that you will always get a confirmation email that your item has been posted. If you don't get than within 48 hours, send an email to shake the bushes about what happened to it.
