Trustee Line for January 2013

A PDF version of this issue to distribute to your rooms, or to print out for easier reading, will be available after 1/31/13.

Thoughts From The Trustees - Current and Past

The subjects listed below are 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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Meeting Closures and Unity Step 5

1/1/13 - 11:50 PM
During the 4th quarter of 2012, a serious problem was uncovered in NJ Intergroup. It is a problem that affects GA as a whole and has been with us for more years than I would care to admit. The bigger picture is that this problem is most likely happening in many other areas. It is a simple issue that has profound impact on Unity Step 5 – Gamblers Anonymous has but one primary purpose - to carry its message to the compulsive gambler who still suffers.

Here's the scenario…A room decides to close for a meeting one week because the facilities in which the meeting is held has a project that will require use of the room in which the GA meeting is normally held. A notice was given to the group 2 months in advance. It was never read to the room and then at the meeting just before that date, someone lets the members in attendance know that there won't be a meeting the following week. Nobody tells any of the officers at Intergroup where we have close to 50 rooms. It doesn't make it to the hotline coordinator in order for him to notify all the volunteers who would send new members to this room. It doesn't make it to the website admin to distribute to all the 250+ registered members in our area. Only the 10-12 members from the specific room know about it.

The negative effect of this lack of notice, is that people who are looking to make their first meeting and go to the NJ website, don't know not to go to this room because there is no notice that the room will be closed for that specific date. How about that member who is looking to make his first meeting and calls the hotline and gets information on that room from a volunteer who didn't know about the room closure.

So it's off to the meeting for this potential member who mustered all the strength he had to admit that he has to take care of his gambling problem. He gets there and there is no meeting. Frustrated, aggravated and a whole bunch of other things, he utters the 2 words you never want to hear from a compulsive gambler – 'F*** It'. Let your imagination take you to wherever this person heads next, with a good hard look at someone that could be looking to take his own life. Do you want to dwell on such an event and wonder if GA didn't help that situation happen? The strange thing is that we don't know who this person is and if he were to take his life, none of us in GA would know about it.

Rooms close for various reasons, and this has been a constant for the history of GA. In speaking to some of the other Trustees about this situation, some of said that their areas have a communications coordinator to disseminate such information. That may seem like a solution to this problem, but I maintain that it is merely a Band-Aid on a hemorrhage. In NJ, the Council on Compulsive Gambling has a huge footprint. Although I don't have any facts to back up this statement, this entity is responsible for the vast majority of new members coming to the rooms in NJ. Their hotline number is printed on the back of lottery tickets, billboard advertisements, signs in the casinos and other gambling venues.

This chapter of the Council has its own website with meeting information they believe to be correct, but it is unlikely that they have current information on room closures. Let's take that up a level to the ISO website that doesn't have any provisions for listing meeting closures, nor could they afford the personnel to stay on top of such situations even if the site had that capability. The hole of misinformation gets deeper and deeper.

So maybe NJ Intergroup can put together a protocol to collect this information and attempt to get it to as many people as possible, but how do we take care of the outside entities that provide information to the public via their websites and hotlines? How do we begin to address the ISO website inquiries? How do we do right by the compulsive gambler seeking correct information to handle his problem?

I'm looking for some dialogue on this subject. Some may say that we can only take care of our own backyard. That may be a variant on the Serenity Prayer, but maybe there is much more that we can do. NJ Intergroup will no doubt begin to deal with the issue and example I cited at the beginning of this submission, but it may just be an empty victory in our pursuit of carrying the message.

David M. – Area 12, New Jersey

1/2/13 – 10:01 AM
David,

Thank you for raising this serious issue. Only last week we had a meeting which cancelled late with no regard for anyone apart from the members who attend and no inkling of the responsibility to a member in need who has a right to know. This was done a with a nonchalant reference to the first part of unity step four and a complete disregard to the rest of that step. Easy enough provide the information but difficult to change the attitude. Fortunately there was enough time to arrange a responsible member from another group to wait outside and ensure no member was left wanting.

Less than two years ago I visited the only meeting in a country with 70 million inhabitants to find nobody turned up apart from myself and a visitor from your country. A kind employee of the café contacted one of the regular attenders who informed us, I quote, " If there are only two people there who don't normally attend there is no point in getting there at this stage "

Your compatriot, who was a new resident of the area, spent some time talking to me and then attended instead a meeting of his other fellowship and I went home, the words of a man who badly needed a meeting ringing in my ears and a strong feeling that I would not be seeing him at a meeting in the foreseeable.

Is there any way, without violating the guidance code, of having a live message board, specifically and solely for the purpose of listing meetings in each area, as part of the site.

When I ask is there any way I really mean is there a fundamental reason it would waste time to bring it as an agenda item.

I personally am not in favour of online meetings, while accepting the usefulness of message boards forums, as there are too many issues at present.

This proposal would differ to an online meeting or a forum and have less problems if, for example, a responsible member or two from each area took responsibility for keeping their areas meetings list uptodate as best they could.

My gut feeling is that it would need to be specifically and solely for the purpose of listing of regular meetings complying with the guidance code, by the areas involved.

I understand that there would still be gaps and misinformation, poor timing etc. would still exist, but it would be a good use of modern methods for an age old problem.

It might also encourage more areas to register with the ISO, become more accountable and, above all, have the guidance code and awareness of it out there.

I'm sure this has been thought of before but it's all I have to offer today. I'm looking forward to this dialogue continuing and perhaps some progress.

Odie B. - Trustee, Area 36, Ireland SEast

1/5/13 - 4:18 PM
David,

As always, thanks for raising some serious and real questions. Many regular GA attendees have no problem with a meeting closing or simply forget that a person looking for their first meetings other option may be suicide. There are at least 2 issues to deal with: The issue of unexpected room closures (usually weather related) or scheduled ones (closure of a facility due to other use, holiday, etc) and that of notifying people in GA and those not yet in GA.

Let's talk to the issue of room closures as it relates to current GA members. About 6 years ago on Long Island, Tom Z started our Communications Committee (CC). Emails are sent to address a number of subjects but I'll keep this to the ones that relate to room closures, etc. In an ideal world, Room Secretaries would reach out to the Head of the Communications Committee as well as the Hotline Chairperson as early as it is known that a room is closing. Example, my regular Monday meeting reached out to our facility a month or so prior to Christmas and New Years Eves and ultimately it was decided there would not be a meeting either week. We immediately got an email to the CC and an email blast was sent to all the members on our CC mail distribution list. (Incidentally, there is at least 1 recipient from each LI meeting on the distribution list). More or less the same procedure is followed when there is an unexpected closure obviously without the lead time of a known closing.

On the subject of new people, it seems there is no manpower nationally or locally nor is it feasible to update websites with regard to meeting closures. Undoubtedly, local areas need to be proactive in notifying local hotlines and CCs in these situations to at least make sure someone doesn't get sent to a meeting that intends to be closed. At least this way, if someone went to a meeting and/or was looking for a meeting in a specific local area, they would have a resource to get current and updated meeting information.

In New Jersey's case, I am sure the Council is not about to dedicate resources to listing room closures so it would probably be prudent for the Council, GA ISO, and all local areas for that matter to clearly update their meeting list to include a disclaimer along the lines of: This meeting list is current as of (the last update date). Meeting locations and times are subject to change. Please make sure to call (fill in local hotline number) to confirm this information.

Hope this helps.

Steve T. - Area 14 Long Island, NY

1/12/13 - 6:17 PM
Reading this entry it took me back to my very first call to G.A. . I talked with a member who would later become my sponsor. He sent me a meeting list for my area. I went to the meeting he said he attended regularly with my wife escorting me. There was a meeting there however it was an AA meeting. An AA member told us that there used to be a meeting of G.A. there but they hadn't been there in a couple weeks. My wife immediately accused me of pulling another con job on her and would I have said I attended if she didn't come with me? This particular meeting had changed locations and I had been sent an old copy of the meeting list by mistake. If I had been suicidal at that point twenty six years ago I'm not sure I'd be here writing this today.

Make no mistake, this is a very serious subject. it became very apparent that updating meeting information properly and promptly as well as disposing of the old lists was very important. so who is really the responsible person for accomplishing this task? I believe the answer to that question is "Everyone'.

There are many scenario's that can occur when looking at this matter here are just a few.

1. Prompt updating of ISO website directories by each meeting when there is a change in information.

2. Prompt updating of the hot line information for each area.

3. Full disclosure of all temporary changes or meeting closures to all the entities

that use our meeting lists, i.e. hospitals, mental health clinics, counselors, churches etc.; to include all hot line volunteers so they can relate these changes if they receive a call during that period of time.

4. Posting a note at the location or a member in case someone who is unaware of the changes shows up for the meeting. In the case of a message it should include a phone number to call to talk with a member.

Just to name a few.

Can we plug all these voids that could cause a person to be alone at a critical moment like this? Maybe not all cases but if each member makes it a point to be more aware of the importance of accurate meeting information it would certainly reduce the amount of the incidents happening. We hear about these incidents occasionally just think about the ones we don't hear about. If we avert one incident it is worth it, especially to that person.

Some of the members I've spoken with suggest "specific items" be placed in the Guidance Code directing each meeting on their responsibilities to make them more accountable. Pointing fingers is not the answer, being responsible is the answer. Someone else will handle it is not the attitude we need here.

I'm suggesting that a few guidelines to help increase awareness be placed in both the Group Handbook and the Information Packet. I intend to pursue that for an agenda item on the Vancouver BOT agenda. I hope the dialogue on this subject continues in this Trustee Line issue and look forward to any and all ideas and opinions.

Happy New Year and I'll see you in Vancouver.

Steve R. - Area 2B Trustee, Sacramento Area

One International Conference A Year

1/4/13 - 11:59 AM
Happy New Year to all of my fellow Trustees!

I have posted a question on the Trustee Poll and am hoping for a conversation to begin here regarding this item. For those of you who have not yet had the opportunity to view this item, it is simply asking if having one international conference (in the spring) and one BOT meeting (in the fall) may be a more responsible way for the BOT to move forward.

I personally feel that one meeting per year should be more than adequate to meet our needs, however; I am also aware that many trustees feel we need two meetings per year. This solution will accomplish both the ‘need’ for two meetings per year and allow us, at the level of the BOT, to be more fiscally responsible to our areas.

As it currently stands, the estimated cost per trustee to attend an international conference is around $1250. This includes the registration for the conference (which is required), airfare, transportation, meals and the hotel for four nights. Please keep in mind, this is just an estimation, it can be a little more or a little less for each trustee. If we were to go to one international conference per year and one BOT meeting per year, we can save our areas approximately $450 per trustee. For my area, that would be a savings of $900 or more. For an area with 6 trustees, that would be a savings of over $2700. We have much better things to do with that money other than sending our trustees to a conference every 6 months. For example, improving our public relations, buying literature for a room that can’t afford to buy new literature, help new meetings start up, better support the ISO and our area intergroup.

We learn early on in our recovery that we have to take responsibility for our actions. We have to learn to become accountable, to ourselves, our families and our fellowship! How can we call ourselves responsible when we so foolishly waste our area’s hard earned money in this way? I enjoy the social aspect of these conferences as much as anyone else, and yes, fellowship is crucial to our personal recovery. However; the simple fact of the matter is, my area does not send me to these meetings for my own recovery and fellowship. They send me so that our area has representation in GA as a whole. Our primary purpose is to help the compulsive gambler WHO STILL SUFFERS? Who are we benefitting with two internationals a year? How does this help reach our primary purpose?

We also have a responsibility to our current and future trustees. As it currently stands, most people have to take at least six days off per year to attend these conferences. I personally get 2 weeks (10 days) of vacation per year. That leaves me 4 days to spend with my family. Yes, I have a duty to the BOT, however; I also have a duty to my family. Nobody should have to choose which is a priority here.

So far on the poll we have 9 voting yes, 1 voting probably yes but need more information (see above!) and 1 no. Let's use this page as intended and vote and discuss! I look forward to reading the feedback.

Your Sister in Recovery,
Karen E. - Area 8A, Minnesota

1/5/13 - 7:24 PM
Karen,

Great topic and I believe a more timely topic than every before. We have over 50 new Trustees for this term who might view this subject very differently than the previous times this topic has come up for a vote that has always ended up as a negative outcome.

There are many who talk about how beneficial the International conferences are for unity and everyone's general recovery. I agree that such considerations are valid, but we are unfortunately forced to face the reality of the expense involved with conferences from the area Intergroup perspective.

As the Fellowship expands, the financial health of the Intergroup treasuries seem to be dwindling year-by-year. Over the years, cost for these conference have continued to expand. I have been to too many rooms where long time members still put in just a dollar. That is a separate discussion, but it still remains a primary reason why the conferences are such a heavy financial load.

I took the job of Trustee not to go to a conference, but to do the work for 2 solid days of the Board of Trustees. It's nice to be able to attend the conference and all that it offers, but that's not my objective. In fact, I would be in favor of 2 Board of Trustees only meetings in a central location convenient to everyone and have it there each time. Chicago and St. Louis continue to be brought up as possible places. Wherever it is, the Trustees could get the job done in 2 days, without the need to take extra time to attend the conferences. I know that sounds harsh, but it's easy to understand why GA members say that they pay for the Trustees to take a vacation twice a year. That entire premise could be overcome by completely separating conferences from Trustee meetings.

Other than overseas travelers, people could fly in on the day of the Trustee meeting's beginning, let's say at 12 noon. This is 2 hours later than when the Trustee meetings currently starts, but the meeting would be unencumbered with concerns about having to close by 4'ish on the second day to make way for the conference banquet. That would give us an additional 6+ hours or more.

I don't subscribe to the thinking that moving to 1 conference denies areas from putting on a conference. That option is still there. Many years ago, 3 or more areas would submit bids for conferences and a vote had to be taken to approve a specific area that offered the best deal. Nowadays, we can't get bids for one conference. Case in point, the last 2 conferences yielded no bids for the designated time. If we don't have a bid for the Fall 2014 slot in Vancouver, it will be the second time there is no bid and the BOT Chair will have to pick the site of what will be just a Trustee meeting.

International conferences are also fund-raisers for ISO. Eliminating one conference a year would impair ISOs cash position, but isn't it time that we all start thinking about this from the view of what is happening to our local area treasuries, instead of trying to feed the ISO income stream at our expense? I imagine this entire subject of members feeling that their areas are paying for the Trustees to have a vacation would be moot if we just had Trustee meetings, without the conferences.

Our local rooms are the ones that we all represent, and they are getting really tired from all the requests for money. Instead of trying to focus only on how get more money from our members, maybe we should be equally concerned on how to cut the costs for the local area Intergroups.

There are many other considerations that should be brought up about this subject. Hopefully others will take the time to let everyone know how they feel.

David M. – Area 12, New Jersey

1/8/13 - 12:04 PM
Happy New Year Trustees,

I imagine that I have a contrary opinion on this issue.

With only a few exceptions Gamblers Anonymous has held 2 BOT meetings along with 2 Conferences per year since 1968. That's 44 years of successful procedure!

I believe the procedure we have in place for any area NOT bidding on a Spring/Fall Conference is adequate and prudent.

But to restrict areas that want to bid and host an International Conference in either the Spring or Fall would be unfair to those areas. I think it does a dis-service to the members in that particular area.

To say to San Diego, Los Angeles, Tampa, and Montreal, the last 4 Fall Conferences, No thanks. We are just going to have a BOT Meeting because of some Intergroup funding shortfalls would be detrimental to GA as a whole in my opinion.

The intrinsic value of International Conferences for the entire Fellowship far outweigh the economic problems some Intergroups might be having.

There are other solutions to the economic aspect. Area 6 has addressed these problems and have solved them. The GA way. If anyone would like to know what we did here, I would be glad to share them.

The Fellowship as a whole is what I try to stay focused on.

I could go on and on about the benefits, the learning, the recovery, the growth, the unity, that International Conferences offer. But I will stop here.

Just one member's opinion,

Peace,
Richie S. - Area 6 Trustee, Southern Florida

1/12/13 - 3:26 PM
Hello Fellow Trustees,

I do support the one conference a year idea but must admit economics is usually not my primary concern on many issues. Typically, money is not our problem. I feel our time as Trustees at these meetings could be much better used if we start to embrace the technology and resources we have (The Trustee Line and Trustee Poll most specifically) so that the most important matters facing the fellowship can be addressed in person.

Before becoming a Trustee, I asked a number of people to share their experiences with me. Tom Z told me an important piece of the Trustee meetings is the collaboration that goes on with different areas sharing their ideas to better the fellowship as a whole. Circling back to Ritchie's post, economics is something that could plague many areas and I would love for him to share Area 6's ideas here as this could most certainly benefit other areas.

Steve T. - Area 14, Long Island, NY

1/13/13 - 10:32 PM
Karen,

I think your idea of one International BOT meeting and conference in the spring and one BOT meeting in the fall in the midwest is a great idea. Area 8D Intergroup can't afford to send one trustee let alone two. Currently we only have one trustee (me) and the other trustee position is vacant. Everyone here knows that the most any trustee has gotten in the last several years is $400 for expenses. Even now with only one trustee. Our area doesn't have much money and fundraisers have not worked here. It's gotten to be a situation that to be a trustee you have to be able to afford to cover a large portion of your expenses. I strongly have a problem with this. There are many people in our area that would make a good trustee but do to the out of pocket expense they are unable to be elected and accept the position. You're so right that we could use out area's money on expenses to help the Gambler who still suffers.

I also like the idea of having one BOT meeting in the midwest in the fall to cut down on the expenses. More people could drive and cut expenses as well.

Thanks for adding this to the agenda.
Jo K. - Area 8D Trustee, Missouri

1/15/13 - 1:13 PM
Hi Karen,

Happy new year,

I would like to comment on your question. When I first heard someone mention changing the International conferences to once a year instead of twice, I was shocked and hurt, and against it 100%. Why would anyone want to change the opportunity of getting together at a GA conference to have fellowship, workshops, exchanges of ideas etc from every six months to only once a year. I get so much out of these conferences, meet people from all over and create long term friendships...

Then, slowly I started to see the other side. Your points are very valid and important. Now, I can almost say I will be in agreement and vote for one conference a year. Maybe if we had one conference, we would get a bigger participation from US and international members and trustees. I had been to over a dozen conferences, International and mini before I ever became a trustee. I paid my own way, then when I became a trustee I was fully funded. LA intergroup has been strong through the years, but that might not be the fact for ever. We split into two as Orange County split off and became Area 1A back in 2010. So we lost 18 meetings back then. And this year the Inland Empire has split off with their own Intergroup and are taking about 30 meetings with them. They will probably be Area 1B. This means we will not get the financial support of those meetings. So we will not be able to support five trustees and will probably have to partially fund them or go with three of four trustees instead.

I have read Richie's post on the Trustee line and he makes some fine points. So I am again torn. But I am leaning towards one conference a year. Chicago conference sounds great, it is sort of in the middle of the continent and a central location. I would support that idea.

Thanks,
Ara H. - Area 1, Los Angeles

1/17/13 - 4:03 PM
"It's not about the money" How many times have I heard those words spoken in a GA room? How many times have I said them myself? With a little over 2 years of abstinence I was fortunate enough that our Trustee (James D) repeatedly talked about National Conferences and the importance of trying to get to one. Not because of the Trustee meetings, but because of another part of our fellowship. A little something called UNITY.

When I told James I could not afford it, he said "You can't afford NOT to do it". At the time I did not understand this, but shortly thereafter I found a way and made it to my first national Conference in Pittsburgh in 2001.It turned out to be a LIFE ALTERING trip for me. It was the beginning of my RECOVERY.

This was the first of many conferences I attended. The first few were strictly as a GA member. Somehow I trickled into the Trustee Meetings and found an area of our fellowship that I was drawn to. A few more trips into the "room" finally gave me enough insight that I knew it was time to run for Trustee in Area 13B. After 5 years of serving as Trustee, it was time to step down to give others the chance to experience this great gift.

Things come full circle, there I was once again where I began, at a GA Conference as a GA member with no job to do nor a title. My sole purpose was to see friends, share ideas and spend time with my "family" in San Diego. As G-D would have it, that was not to be the plan for me. I'm a server, therefore when David M nominated me for 2nd Co-Chair of the BOT, I could not refuse. Once again I feel truly blessed at being given the opportunity to serve this fellowship I call home.

So what does this have to do with 1 or 2 Conferences a year?

Everything! So early in my recovery I did not have the means to go to a Conference in California or Florida or anywhere else for that matter that would require an airline flight. Pittsburgh was less than a day's drive for me. Yes, Pittsburgh was a Spring Conference, but that does not change the fact that if there was only 1 Conference to bid on that year, I may have never gotten to my first Conference and I do not know where I would be today. Just my story, that's all.

I'm in complete agreement that many of our Intergroups are struggling financially and that we must be financially sound and show our members that we are not spending their money foolishly. I don't believe anyone here is trying to do that. As a former Trustee, I ALWAYS worked on getting the best prices for airfare, etc. when going to a Conference. I'm sure you all do the same.

So what is the answer?

First let me state that I am in agreement with Richie S. that our current policy of two consecutive non-bids on a Conference should in fact be turned over to the Chair of the BOT to make arrangements for a Trustee meeting without a Conference.

As Karen E. stated, the savings would be approximately $450 for each Trustee in her area. Now, lets take into consideration the times that were presented by David M. Anything can be changed by the BOT including the times of the meetings, the required space needed to bid on a Conference and the meal plan of a Conference. Let's just say that the BOT was to pass that the Friday meeting was to start at 12:00 noon and continue to 11:00 PM and Friday night dinner was optional for a conference and a plan would have to be available to exclude Friday night dinner.

Although Trustees attending a BOT meeting must pay the registration fee, there is nothing else that states we have to attend or stay for the Conference itself. In the case of Area 8A, there would be a savings of $800 per Trustee ($450 per conference less the registration fee) or $4,800 per year. If a Trustee wants to attend the Conference and the area cannot afford it, then let the area pay only for the Trustee Meeting and let the Trustee pay their own way for the Conference. With that said, it has always been my personal belief that a member's financial status should not be a factor when deciding to run for Trustee. Therefore, in our area we always try and fund our Trustees 100%. Following these guidelines would ensure that the duties of the Trustees are still being done, we still get 2 Conferences a year and area's will save money.

Having chaired an International Conference in Cherry Hill, NJ, I can speak first hand on the incredible unity that was brought to our area during that time. For those of you who have experienced this, it is easy to see the impact a Conference has on an area. For those who have never experienced this, I hope you consider it so one day your area can experience the same gift that so many others have in the past. If we only have one Conference a year, your less likely to have one in your area.

Can't wait to see you all in Vancouver!!

Yours in recovery,
Andy R. - Past Trustee, Area 13B

Do As I Say - Not As I Do

1/7/13 - 12:10 AM
I first became a Trustee in 2000. At that time I received a copy of the 'Past Trustees Decisions'. This was a voluntary compilation by a few Trustees of all the past decisions of the Board of Trustees going back to 1967. It is not being used as an approved publication because many of the decisions listed in it were straw votes and they are not valid decisions.

One year prior to my start as a Trustee, the BOT had a straw vote stating that it was appropriate for members to own a 401(k) plan. So here we have a non-binding decision about it being ok to OWN a retirement plan, not trade them. As of that example, a bridge was being built for the delusional members of our Fellowship who felt that the straw vote created an exception for those who wanted to trade the markets. The only problem, trading or investing in the financial markets is gambling – period, the end. The Combo Book clearly states that playing the stock market is gambling, because it involves a bet or a wager. You have to put up money each time you trade stock. Page 14 says '… the first bet is the one to avoid … This includes Internet gambling, the stock market, commodities, options…'

This situation was a ticking time bomb in many people's eyes, the fact that people were denying that they were gambling was sickening. As a result, I put a motion before the BOT to create a committee to come up with language about the stock market, retirement accounts and Gamblers Anonymous, and close one of many gaping holes in our literature. After a year of work by some very strong members, a pamphlet was created and approved in 2003 that took the 'wiggle room' away from those members that thought they were different than everyone else in the Fellowship.

It should be known that putting your money in the bank is no way to save for the future. Too often members default to the 'this is a one day at a time program – don't worry about the future' answer for everything. Planning ahead is essential to fulfill Recovery Step 2. The stock market, in one form or another, is the most common vehicle used for investments, but it does not mean that this is a green light for the compulsive gambler to trade his/her own money. If you are not familiar with this pamphlet, it's time to get one and read it from cover to cover.

The pamphlet is 17 pages, similar to the Combo Book. It has very clear language about the stock market, retirement accounts and Gamblers Anonymous. It has very clear language that any such efforts MUST, not should, be put into someone else's hand. The compulsive gambler must be out of the decision loop.

Recently, I have heard that some Trustees, both current and past, are trading their own accounts in the stock market and rationalizing their efforts with every possible excuse conceivable. There is even discussion that the pamphlet is only meant for new members and that if you gambled on something else, it's ok to trade the market. That is 1,000% incorrect. It is for every member, irrespective of time in the program. We do not have 2 different classes of members; those who can't gamble and those who do because they have a lot of time in the program. Thinking that, is arrogance on a completely irrational scale.

How can any Trustee, justify such a situation. How can those same Trustees bark at the newer members who want to trade their own accounts and tell them that if they want to recover they have to COMPLETELY stop gambling, when they themselves are filthy dirty? How many different ways can you spell HYPOCRISY? Number 2 in the Trustee Responsibilities is 'Be a living example of the precepts of Gamblers Anonymous and personally work the Steps of Recovery and Unity.' Number 3 states 'Uphold the Guidance Code, and all decision made by the Board of Trustees (not fulfilling this affects GA as a whole). Trading the market for any reason, as a compulsive gambler and also as a Trustee, is dishonesty in its worst form.

So let me throw out a challenge to those Trustees who trade their own accounts or those of relatives, either for retirement or otherwise. If you are convinced you are NOT gambling while doing this, then have the guts to admit it openly and respond to this posting by saying so. I know I'm a compulsive gambler and a terrible handicapper, but I am quite certain that nobody will admit to this publicly.

My position, and that of many other Trustees, is that if you are doing this as a Trustee, you should immediately be removed from the position because you are doing something detrimental that affects GA as a whole. I don't care if you are in 2 years or 50 years – you should not be allowed to be a Trustee because you have crossed a hard line and violated the very basic tenets of the Fellowship. Re-declare your date and move out of the way, because you have been lying to the members you represent and also to yourself. Members don't have responsibilities, but the Trustees do.

Whatever your position, get it posted here. This is exactly what the Trustee Line is about.

David M. – Area 12, New Jersey

1/7/13 - 7:49 AM
David,

I am in total agreement with you on this one. Although most of us have a retirement plan of some sort for our retirement, most of them in a 401K, we should have someone else taking care of this. I am one of the fortunate ones who have a spouse willing to do this for me. I know that I have no business whatsoever even picking what my 401k should go into. Most human resource departments will help with this also. For those that are doing this on their own, perhaps a financial advisor is the solution. My husband uses one for our finances and together, they figure out where to put everything. I am completely out of the loop with the exception of my signature when needed. I am aware of where we are at, but the decision is not mine to make.

Just my two cents worth. I hope some responses come up to this topic. I'm curious to see how others feel about this.

YSIR, Karen E. - Area 8A

1/9/13 - 7:13 AM
I am happy to state in black and white I do not have any such plan and I am not in any loop on any such plan or anything resembling any such plan.

The matter is of concern to me though. The guidance code may have a grey cover but the genesis, intent and meaning of our literature and the fellowship position on this matter is black and white, just like the pages inside the cover.

Perfectionists and compulsive gamblers in action alike, justify their self imposed myopia, their denial of reality and their self destructive behaviour by DOING THINGS RIGHT as they see it.

Leaders, on the other hand, MUST attempt to DO THE RIGHT THING.

Given that this body, particularly some members of it, has spent a lot of time clarifying the position on this matter and the end product was passed in due process by this body, there can be no grey area here.

If any trustee is gambling they should step aside quietly. They no longer meet the REQUIREMENTS of being a trustee.

If they have no desire to stop gambling, then their membership of this fellowship is more than a little in question.

Odie B. - Trustee, Area 36 - Ireland S East

Funding of Trustees

1/13/13 - 5:01 PM
I have had a few requests to share what Area 6 does in reference to funding their Trustees. Here goes!

First 35 years ago Area 6 decided to fund their Trustees FULLY for the meeting and the Conference. We can go into those reasons later. At that time we had 1 Trustee and 1 Alternate. We figured it would take $600 to send a Trustee to a Conf. at that time. So the first $100 of monthly Inter-group donations was put into a Trustee reserve. Sort of a budget meeting for Inter-group. This went well for a long time.

When the Alternates were made FULL Trustees we put away $200 per month This worked well also. As the cost of Conferences increased we raised the monthly trustee reserve accordingly. All of the trustees here in Area 6 have been pretty frugal..sharing rooms etc

Then our area continued to grow in rooms and members. And we hosted the 2002 Conf. which was a savings to our Inter-group. We asked for an additional Trustee. We now put away $350 of monthly donations in a trustee reserve for our 3 Trustees. We have very few fund raisers, but we started an Intergroup walk-a-thon, and our yearly mini conf has turned a small profit. We also have joined the National Hotline System which has resulted in a $1,500 yearly savings.

If you would like to reach me I am always available. But I thank our wise forefathers for setting up this system.

Richie S. - Area 6, Southern Florida

1/13/13 - 8:48 PM
Richie,

It sounds like your area has a good solution that works for YOUR area. That solution would not work for our area for the simple reason that our intergroup does not make enough money every month to put that amount back to fund the 2 trustees that we have. We have fundraisers, and we can usually raise the money that is needed to fully fund our trustees in this manner. I wonder how many other areas besides ours is hurting for funding? My guess is there are several. I think its sad, as well as extremely selfish, that we have to keep asking our members for funding to send its trustees to 2 expensive conferences per year when they would much rather put that money into helping our still suffering brothers and sisters.

We also have a mini conference every year. It is a great time for fellowship and recovery and we share that with other members of our area, and a number of members from other areas as well. We charge $70.00 per person if they choose the full package (lunch and dinner on Friday, brunch on Sunday) or $30 if they don't want the meals. We even offer scholorships for those who can't afford it. Our conference offers everything an international conference offers, at an affordable price for everyone. THAT is the conference that I use for fellowship and to work on MY recovery, not the internationals. I attend those to fulfill my obligation as a Trustee for the BUSINESS of GA.

I am forever grateful for this wonderful program that has saved my life. It's time for us to do the responsible thing for those we serve and give back to the program.

YSIR Karen E. - Area 8A, Minnesota

Elections With A Purpose

1/13/13 - 11:47 PM
I want to tell everyone that reads this, that being at the Executive Board table is not an easy job. My hat is off to Denis, Herb and Andy for taking the positions they have at the front table for this term, and keeping the crazy people on the other side in order. By the way, as a Trustee, I am self-admittedly a crazy person.

For all the Trustees who have become Trustees for the first time within the last 6 years, you have never participating in that epic period called… 'Board of Trustees – Unleashed.' Prior to the Rules and Procedures being adopted, the BOT meetings were a free-for-all. As I like to say, decisions were inconsistent from Chair to Co-Chair to Co-Chair, session to session, day to day, and conference to conference. We crazy people love to take a moment of weakness or indecision on the part of others, and turn it into our favorite state of mind when we were gambling – chaos. Trust me, it got ugly back in those days. I don't miss them for a moment.

What we see now is order and structure because the Rules and Procedures eliminate the imposition of one person's will on the rest of the Board of Trustees from a position of authority, which is part of the job of the Executive Board. That does not mean the job at the front table is easy. Certainly, what many of you don't know is the depth of involvement the job of a Chair entails. This is not just keeping the rudder to the ship straight for 2 days twice a year, but doing work in between the conferences.

In Vancouver, we will be electing a new Executive Board. What we need to do is make sure that we have qualified people in the 3 slots that are available. During the speeches that each nominee will give, remember that it is unimportant how much each person loves the Fellowship. It also is unimportant to hear how the nominees love the program and how it saved their lives. What needs to be evaluated is who is going to carry the ball for the meetings and what happens in between the meetings. The choices must come down to conviction, commitment and real involvement.

Trustees who sit in their seats each meeting, don't submit agenda items, don't get up to the microphone, and basically only put their hands up for votes, are not the people we want or need at the front table. Whomever it is that you end up voting for, make sure that you require that person to make a believable presentation about what they can and will do for the Trustees.

A number of years ago, I tried to put a motion together for the sake of the Board of Trustees, which was supposed to go into the Guidance Code. It got a majority approval, but not the necessary two-thirds vote, thus it failed. The general theme was that in order to be elected as the Chairman of the Board of Trustees, a member had to have previously served on the Executive Board. What that was meant to do was to give the new person an opportunity to see what the job of Chair of the Board of Trustees position is all about, by taking one of the Co-Chair positions.

The Board of Trustees has its wheels on the track. Having an inexperienced person take the position of Chair of the Board of Trustees puts the risk back into probability of the BOT not functioning or growing in a healthy way. Those who might rise against such a possible agenda item are stuck in an issue about their own ego. So the question is, do we want someone with some or a lot of experience to be in the Chair position, or someone who wants to run the ship without the rudder in the water? Are going to elect someone based on personalities or someone who is qualified for the job?

David M. – Area 12, New Jersey

PS – This is not a pitch for anyone other than whomever the BOT believes is the best person for the job.

Passports

1/23/13 - 11:24 PM
I'm curious and would like to know the opinion of this subject, so I'm hoping there will be some feedback here. In the case of a trustee who is not someone who travels outside the US, should a passport to attend a BOT Meeting outside the US be considered a trustee expense if the Intergroup funds are available? How are other areas handling this?

Steve R. - Area 2B Trustee, Greater Sacramento, California

1/24/13 - 2:16 PM

I myself do not travel outside the United States, so I have never needed a passport other than when needed to attend Trustee meetings.

Since my area can't afford to fund the area's Trustees in full I have made the cost of the passport a donation from me to my Intergroup, as I have done in the past also with my air travel mileage.

This may not answer Steve R's question, but it is how we have done it in the past.

Joe B. - Area 6 C, North & South Carolina

1/26/13 - 2:30 PM
Steve,

Generally speaking, a first time passport book costs a total of $135 and a passport card is $85. The U.S. Passport Card can be used to enter the United States from Canada, Mexico, the Caribbean, and Bermuda at land border crossings or sea ports-of-entry and is more convenient and less expensive than a passport book. However, the passport card cannot be used for international travel by air.

As to who should pay, I wouldn't find fault with an Intergroup picking up the tab for this if it could afford it but given the 10 year life span of the passport in my mind it's a cost the Trustee really should absorb irrespective of the Intergroup's Treasury.

Either way, I hope to meet you and many other Trustees in Vancouver.

Steve T. - Area 14 - Long Island, NY

1/26/13 - 9:21 PM
I see this issue as very clear regarding the expensing of a Trustee's passport. The easy answer is that if there was a one-trip passport variant, then surely it would be a valid expense for an area to consider as reimbursable to the Trustee for conferences in another country, such as the upcoming Vancouver event. Of course that would require approval by the area's trusted servants first. I'm fairly certain that few if any areas have a 'blank check' reimbursement policy for Trustees who attend Trustee meetings. Additionally, as with other reimbursable items, the Trustee must have an explicit cash outlay in order to be reimbursed. Hopefully, everyone remembers what happened in Cherry Hill. That was an ugly situation where a Trustee tried to get reimbursed for airline tickets as if they were paid for even though the Trustee used miles and/or awards to get the tickets. Hopefully, no other Trustees won't try to pull the wool over their area's eyes like that again.

If a Trustee gets a regular passport, either prior to knowing about a conference or as a result of needing one to attend a conference, as Steve T. said above, passports last for 10 years, and that should not be a reimbursable expense. The passport is something that can be used for other purposes throughout the 10-year term. Having said that, it also does not mean that the cost of the passport should be amortized to a yearly cost and then have the area pay for the use of the passport. This would open up a large can of worms. What about someone that got a passport for business or personal travel many years ago. Now we are thinking about giving that person some money toward a cost and need for something entirely different?

I know Steve R. is asking this question for opinions from the Trustees, but more and more of our areas are financially weakening. That means less money from the areas for expense reimbursement to the Trustees, which obviously puts a greater financial burden on the Trustees. This is going to be an expensive conference for many from the US. Adding an extra $135 for a passport, may just be more than many Trustees can financially handle right now. The harsh reality is that many Trustees may choose to not attend Vancouver, just because of this extra expense that will most likely not be reimbursed. I can't offer any guidance to those in that situation, but if it becomes a reality for you, please make sure to send in an absentee ballot.

David M. - Area 12, New Jersey

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