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Trustee Line for December 2012

A PDF version of this issue to distribute to your rooms, or to print out for easier reading, will be available after 12/31/12.

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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Unity Step 12

12/1/12 - 8:51 AM

Unity Step 12 - Anonymity is the spiritual foundation of the Gamblers Anonymous program, ever reminding us to place principles before personalities.

After Recovery Step 4, this step is the next most vital one for ego deflation. Many members, as they gain some peace and serenity as they abstain from gambling, want to let everyone know how GA has saved their life. For family, friends and co-workers, the change may have been apparent. But how do we relate our story to the outside world?

This step tells us that we need to put our desire aside for personal recognition and share the message of recovery without attaching it to any one person. Every room has numerous inspiring stories of members who have overcome the compulsion to gamble and each is just as important as all the others. It doesn't matter if one member is a stay at home parent and another is a CEO of a large company, their success over gambling can help others. Unity Step 11 covers this topic as well.

This step also applies to anonymity within the rooms. We have all seen the sign 'Whatever is said in the room must remain in the room.' Discussing what another member said in a meeting or events in a member's life outside the room is a violation of this step and hurts group unity. I remember an incident where I was taking someone's inventory with a friend and I noticed he was not happy with the conversation. When I asked why he replied that if I was saying these things about someone else, he wondered what was I saying to other people about him. Every time we talk about someone else, we erode the trust of our room and our fellowship.

Lastly, I want to pass along the idea of spiritual anonymity. I heard a speaker explain this concept many years ago and it helps keep my ego in check, my ears open, and my hand out to all members of GA. Spiritual anonymity is the idea that our fellowship should be structured such that any member can do any job we have in the fellowship. There are no special qualifications beyond a reasonable amount of abstinence that would disqualify a member from holding any position in our fellowship. Granted there are technical or business related jobs that benefit from members who have those skills. But each member should get the opportunity to serve if they desire and I should never feel that someone else or I am irreplaceable.

This step tells me we are all walking, shoulder to shoulder down the road of recovery and that you are just as important as me to the health of our fellowship and the quality of my recovery. This step tells me that I must give my full attention to the Trustee I find most annoying at the microphone because my higher power could use him to get an important message to the room and to me. It also tells me that I must stand aside and pass along the responsibilities of office to other members for their growth and the health of the fellowship. I hope that you all find, and personify, safety, trust, peace, growth and humility in the anonymity of Gamblers Anonymous.

Thanks for the opportunity to share my thoughts,

Paul S. - Area 17 Trustee, Connecticut

Change Is Always Hard

12/1/12 - 10:16 AM

Part of what is exciting about the Trustee meeting immediately following our bi-annual elections is the anticipation of hearing new ideas and new viewpoints about our evolving Fellowship from the New Trustees. I distinctly got the impression that many of those new Trustees were half a step away from getting up to the microphone to be part of the discussions in San Diego, but were still gauging the landscape of this thing we call 'the Trustee meeting'. I am very hopeful that we will have many new voices in Vancouver.

This brings me to the point that was brought up about the stodginess (my word) of the Trustee agenda. It was mentioned that there should be discussion or agenda items on how to improve the Fellowship. Part of the discussion was to have fewer items of housekeeping and changes to our material that are deemed to be insignificant. Interestingly enough, the answer was quite clear. The Trustees are in complete control of this process by submitting items to the agenda and what course the agenda takes.

For me, this brings up several questions and observations, not necessarily in their order of importance.

1-If we go back 10 years in the agendas, only a small percentage of Trustees submit items for the agenda. What does this say about the vast majority of the Trustees? Is it apathy? Is it a lack of trying to help improve the Fellowship by plugging all the holes in how we do things? Are the remaining Trustees intimidated by the process of putting together an agenda item that will pass? Are many of them at the Trustee meeting just to stop changes in the thinking of 'If it ain't broke, don't fix it.' Or worse yet, do many of the Trustees just become Trustees twice a year and do little if anything between Trustee meetings?

2-Why is it that during every Trustee meeting the vast majority of the Trustees never go up to the microphone? Is it stage fright? I remember when I was elected a Trustee in 2000, I had preconceived ideas about each item as I walked into the Trustee meeting. The more people with varying opinions got up to the microphone to let everyone know why they liked or disliked each item, I found my thinking switching back and forth as I weighed each Trustee's opinion. Discussions are critical and everyone needs to say their piece on as many items as there is time. Yet, that doesn't happen.

3-Why are people volunteering for Board of Trustees committees and then not doing their share? Committees seem to be the real backbone of the Trustees workload. Each one is an outgrowth of an agenda item. We should be behind them in every way, but that is not how reality is.

4-I hear people complain about the edginess of the Trustee Line, which prevents them from starting new items or responding to others that have been sent in. If you have an idea, put it out there and don't be a wuss about others who don't agree with your opinion. This is an open platform and the members set the tone of the dialogue. Is everyone so thin-skinned that their feelings are hurt and their egos bruised when someone disagrees with their opinions? Please. The fact is that many agenda items were the outgrowth of discussions on the Trustee Line.

So I want to give credit to those who were so passionate in San Diego about improving the agenda quality, but it sounds similar to the back and forth about Congress and the Fiscal Cliff. We need to do this. We need to do that. But the reality is that few Trustees are doing anything to change things. So far we have

4 agenda items under New Business. You be the judge. And while you're at it, how about sending some items into the Trustee Line. No doubt everyone has 'stuff' they want to get off their chest.

David M. - Area 12, New Jersey

12/8/12 - 3:40 PM

David,

Having just attended my First Trustee conference, I wanted to wait a week to see what type of responses (if any) your post would get and unfortunately, some of my fears about this body seem to be turning to reality.

My opinion is that with many non-business related groups or volunteer entities, people don't commit the same energy nor is the organizational structure in place that would promote participation and accountability on a scale necessary for us to fully carry out our mission. Typically, the 90-10 rule takes over (10% of the people do 90% of the work) and ultimately those people burn out or simply lose the desire to continue carrying all the others.

There were a lot of new Trustees in San Diego and from what I was told by many of my peers their overall participation was respectable given the potential for stage fright or simply finding their way through the process for the first time.

Are there any statistics as to how many Committees we have? How many trustees serve on at least 1 committee? How many of the committees are even functioning?

I joined the Trustee Agenda Poll Committee because I feel this mechanism combined with the Trustee Line provides our body with fantastic technology with which to not only accomplish things between meetings but allow us to more effectively use our face to face time at the actual Trustee meetings.

In our next Committee meeting, I hope to help advance these necessary technological aids to stimulate (ie push) more involvement. There were a number of agenda items that essentially had no place being discussed at the conference and these items contribute to the "end of session rush" to plow through items that really do warrant time and consideration.

But the truth is, we can have all the tools in the world to help us but people have to use them. Come on folks. If you're not going to get involved, step back and give someone else in your area an opportunity to serve.

This body desperately needs contributors to help do the work of this fellowship. We all hear in meetings that the proliferation of gambling is severe and only getting worse. Now more than ever, we need to be able to continue to carry the message of hope to the compulsive gambler who is still suffering and this body needs to be at the heart of it.

Steve T - Area 14, Long Island

It's Called The Trustee Poll - Use It

12/1/12 - 9:21 PM

Hi to all the Trustees,

More than a month has passed since the last Trustee meeting & I know it's getting near the end of the year. Maybe before the year is over we can help make up our minds and look at the Trustee poll, (other than the less than 9% that already have) and vote on the question either Helpline or Hotline for the new phone system that many areas are signing up for.

It won't take you that long to post your vote, and it will not bite either. Paul S. has asked for help, and would like a feeling from the current Trustees on how best to post an agenda item on this subject for the next Trustee meeting. It's like David M said in his latest posting, are you going to let someone else do the work. So how about getting off your ass and VOTE one way or the other.

Joe B. - Area 6C, North Carolina

new version