

Task Force Topic: Technology Task Force 2016

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Background/Historical Info: Technology is changing at a rapid rate, and we can sometimes struggle to keep up. Many conversations occur throughout the Area on how technology impacts our service work. Sometimes this is a good thing, sometimes it is a challenge.

This Task Force will be looking at a few specific policy recommendations to bring to the AWSC Panel for discussion prior to our next elections so that the incoming Technology Coordinator will have good information and guidance prior to taking over.

Charge: Please discuss the following points. Frame your discussion in terms of our Legacies, and how our spiritual principles work to support change as well as value our traditional ways of doing things. Please use your Service Manuals and any research from the WSO or other Areas that you might find helpful. It is not necessary to lock the Area into a particular technology, it is more about how do the spiritual principles of our program guide us to support this element of service.

1. Website continuity – What are the pros and cons of keeping a stable web presence beyond a single panel? How does this value autonomy, as well as unity and consistency?
2. Technology cooperation - How can we integrate technology in to various service positions keeping with our spiritual traditions? What clarity can we bring to encouraging cooperation with, and openness to, new technologies? How can we explore new technologies without double-headed management?
3. Job requirements – Discuss what skills we might consider requiring of a Technology Coordinator, and what skills may be learnable?
4. NFA AFG, Inc. – Discuss how the Website may be part of the “business” side of Area, and whether or not the Technology Coordinator be on the Board of the Corporation? See the Area Charter, section 11.

1) Website Continuity

2) Technology Cooperation

a) What clarity can we bring to encouraging cooperation

b) Exploring new technologies

3) Job Requirements

4) NFA AFG, Inc.

POLICY: What and why we do what we do. This is the will and intent of the Area. It is not subject to change each panel, but provides continuity and stability.

We should have a website and electronic communications at the Area for consistency, stability and unity; making a commitment to stay up to date with technology while also being inclusive regarding different levels of member proficiency.

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PROCEDURE: How we get these things done. These procedures can be changed. The AWSC panel uses KBDM and in cooperation with various Coordinators technology can be used to help facilitate meetings, communication, outreach and growth in service.

TC = Technology Coordinator

- 1. TC can facilitate cooperation among members of AWSC Panel and Area Event chairs**
- 2. TC can bring clarity and educational resources regarding technology**
- 3. TC can help Area be willing to explore new technologies**
- 4. TC should help coordinate purchases of software/hardware at the Area level to facilitate meetings and other Area work**
- 5. TC should follow the Job Description as updated each panel in light of new information**
- 6. TC should be able to work with Area Officers and Board of NFA AFG, Inc to maintain consistency and stability of website and communications programs through the corporation. Particularly maintenance of the domain name, platform etc.**
 - a. Maybe the Technology Coordinator could sit on the NFA AFG Board**
 - b. Decisions about the website should be made in consultation with Officers**
 - c. Hiring special IT workers may be necessary within the Traditions**

SPECIFIC Topics

1. Website Continuity – What are the pros and cons of keeping a stable electronic communication system (web, email, document storage, etc) beyond a single panel? How does this value autonomy, as well as unity and consistency?

Research Here:

- I believe keeping the website stable and fairly consistent is a good POLICY. That way people can learn how to use it, and the changes will come slowly.
- based on the long term discussions at WSO and WSC of “technology” I think it is wise to have a POLICY that uses our Steps, Traditions and Concepts to guide us in how we develop our PROCEDURES. So wanting to keep the Website consistent across panels, recognizing that change comes slowly, and also making a commitment to stay up to date with technology would be POLICY and the how-we-do-it would be procedures that would be up to the Technology Coordinator.

Traditions 1 - progress for the greatest number depends upon unity ... and having a unified web presence goes along with this.

Tradition 2 - our leaders do not govern, so the Technology coordinator works with the other coordinators to aid in using technologies to get the various jobs done.

Tradition 4 - autonomy in how a particular coordinator gets the work done is different from having the autonomy to change what others are able to do. Again, working WITH is different from telling others what to do.

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Tradition 6 - we have a primary spiritual aim, and the Technology Coordinator is primarily focused on recovery, not having to take care of all aspects of technology in the Area. We all need to shoulder our own responsibilities whenever possible.

Tradition 8 - our technology aspect should be non-professional and the Technology Coordinator should be versed in IT but not necessarily making money off of our technology processes. We can hire IT and Tech professionals if we need to.

Tradition 9 - we can create service boards and committees - such as NFA AFG, Inc. Cooperation with this committee allows the Web page to be situated within a 501(c)(3) non-profit business status.

Tradition 11 - we need to always be mindful of our principles of anonymity

- "Technology" was mentioned as far back as the 1996 Conference Summary. The discussion centered on anonymity, copyright issues and there was space in the fellowship for a wide variety of opinions and perspectives. Differences of opinion: "One delegate reported that technology doesn't have anything to do with the Five Year Plan." And "It was reported that the WSO needs to keep up with technology and we must look at ways in which technology can help enhance services."

Other comments from WSC Conference Summaries:

1996 - Ad Hoc Committee on the Internet - public information, online group meetings, first introduction to the members of "the Internet"...discussion centered on online meetings and anonymity.

1997 - Al-Anon Home Page - WSO Website launched on October 12, 1996

1998 - work continued on bringing online meetings into the fellowship, and more understanding of what we could do with our WSO website

1999 - WSO began work on splitting out a "Member's Site" from the general WSO Website.

2001 - began having online registration of groups. Website continuing to develop and get more user friendly.

2007 - e-CAL committee formed for a three year trial. Also a section on "Al-Anon Family Groups in the world today" which included small group discussions for forward-thinking. Some ideas: On-demand 24/7 information on a variety of media, broadcast information emails to individuals from WSO, language translation, links to Al-Anon website, stay current with technology to recruit young people... etc.

2008 - Group Services committee is working on ways to increase use of technology for communication and to strengthen groups and districts. Blogs on using the Legacies in our Personal Lives have been added to the Members Website.

2010 - Chosen Agenda Item focusing on Public Outreach and some mention of technology. 1966 quote from the sixth World Service Conference that "if Al-Anon is to continue to exist, it must continue to grow. There is no standing still without retrogression." Fears of turning into a business. "Technology has created a new environment. Task Force on Technology: used KBDM to "develop a checklist to include the general knowledge necessary to utilize the most common types of technology that would be of benefit to members in service: Data storage, email, Presentations, eCommunities, Excel, Word, Conference Calls, video conferencing. (Terry F was our delegate at this time).

2011 - Chosen Agenda Item #1 - "Wider use of technology could allow for more contact with more people both inside and outside of the fellowship." "This does not take the place of the relationships between our members, groups, Areas and the world at large." Much discussion of the pull between abandoning personal relationships in favor of technology. Also creative use of websites such as hosting a "Service Blog" or "Service Project of the Month" to generate interest.

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2012 - By 2012 the WSC summary is filled with technology references in almost every section. Electronic literature is a big topic, as well as presentations, strengthening communication, etc. There is an excellent Task Force on Conference Structure which details ways to talk about new things, and visions for the future.

- *I know that is a lot of information. I included it because I think it shows how important it is to Al-Anon service when there is consistency and the ability to make changes slowly. I think we can also point our members to the World Service Conference and the WSO website to illustrate how important it is to have stability in the website and in the ability to communicate.*
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Comments here:

*Pros: Easy to maintain for new incoming Technology Coordinator

*Easy to train others.

*Allows for the incoming Technology Coordinator to not have to re-invent the process. Thereby being able to hit the ground running. Would/Could open the position to someone w limited knowledge of websites - don't need to be an expert (though it helps)

*If the person does not have experience in website updating and creation, it would be required that they are willing to be trained on how to do this function. Under communication it will require some knowledge and skills related to how email works.

*I think we need to have a discussion about the emails... especially if each District is going to give their own DR and AISL anonymous emails. Is there a better way of cooperating rather than saying we all have to use the Area email?

*Each district is autonomous and can do what they wish; if they wish to integrate into the Area technology, then using the Area provided emails will give them greater functionality.

2. Technology Cooperation - How can we integrate technology into various service positions keeping with our spiritual traditions?

- **Alateen - Encourage AMIAS to chair Alateen chat room meetings & follow Alateen WSO on social media.**
- **Assemblies - Conduct member surveys & hold elections electronically.**
- AAPP - Continue registering new Alateen groups directly online.
- Archives - Provide storage, backup, & password-protected access to members.
- Events / Convention - Host event sites on the NFA website for continuity & unity.
- Group Records - Register groups directly online. Scan & archive paper forms.
- Literature - Encourage use of E-CAL books & submitting sharings online.
- Public Outreach - Carry the message to professionals & potential newcomers using social media & WSO website.
- **Spanish - Encourage use of Spanish version of WSO website & online Spanish meetings.**
- Technology - Set-up NFA website to take Area donations online to make it easier to fulfill Seventh Tradition. Offer help to District Webmasters to extend set-up for District donations online.

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“The use of [technology] can improve communication, participation, & representation in carrying the message in unity, working in harmony with mutual trust, & singleness of purpose.”

—2013 World Service Conference Summary, p. 72

2a. What clarity can we bring to encouraging cooperation with, and openness to, new technologies?

(Reference the WSO PowerPoint presentation: Welcoming New Practices Thought Force Presentation World Service Conference 2015)

- Keep it simple! Offer workshops/presentations/lessons for only one part of new technology – starting with one that most are familiar with, i.e. just e-mail. Then have escalating “lessons” that cover more complex tools (one at a time), i.e. Area website, Google Drive, Google Hangouts, etc. Include real-world examples of how these technologies can be used for member, group, or business meetings. Offer these “lessons” to AWSC members *first* so they can utilize the info right away & share it throughout their Districts. **(AREA Policy?)**
- Encourage members who don’t have access to technology to consider gaining access (i.e. expand the e-buddy idea, take a friend to an internet café & introduce them to e-mail, social media, etc.). **(AREA Policy?)**
- At Area meetings, encourage members to get an e-buddy for the weekend to help share how the technology is being used & allow for more power strips so members can use electronic devices wherever they sit.
- Encourage use of service tools (i.e. conflict resolution tool kit, sponsorship) that help members address resistance to change & embrace new practices.
- Create an environment at any Group/District/Area meeting that celebrates learning or trying something new.
- Tradition Three speaks of mutual aid - meaning we help & support each other. Part of this is done by using tools available to us & technology is one of these tools. Choosing to be open to new technologies can also expand our ability to communicate, share, & understand. For example, we value the Newcomer because they have a message important to hear. If the Newcomer communicates their message in a way we are closed off to, then that opportunity for growth & for a new relationship is lost. Unity becomes lessened & without change, future progress is also compromised & our common welfare could be in jeopardy – which is the opposite of Tradition One.
“With the help of Al-Anon, my sponsor, and my Higher Power, change need not be so scary. If I don’t at least make an effort, I may never know how much I can accomplish.”

—*Hope for Today*, p. 278

2b. How can we explore new technologies without double-headed management?

Per Tradition Nine, a technology committee can be created & lead by the Technology Coordinator (“TC”). The TC can give committee which new technologies to “test-out”. Committee would report back to TC with pros & cons, whether the technologies are in line with Al-Anon’s spiritual principles, *P55 Task Force Charge – Discuss four points relating to technology, and report at Feb AWSC 2017*
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how best to introduce them to members, etc. TC would report back to Area with findings & devise a plan for going forward.

Recommendation: Strongly urge the TC to create a Technology Committee. Help TC explore ways to create and utilize the committee. The committee could exist across panels to provide consistency and stability. Membership on the committee would be open to the whole Area. This committee could be a Standing Committee of the Area, created in cooperation between the Area Chair and the TC.

Per Tradition Eight, if needed, special workers can be sought (i.e. IT specialists) for professional advice or consultation.

Per Concept Three, while the TC reserves the right of decision in many instances, the inclusion of trusted servants/committee members rich in the knowledge of our Legacies is essential in serving the greater good of Al-Anon/Alateen.

Comments Here:

*I think we need to cite to the Tradition or Concept in our recommendations.

* think these are all great suggestions. I'm wondering if we can decide on just one or two to include in our Task Force recommendations?

* Sure!

*I think proposing changes on a Trial Basis can help alleviate fears, and give everyone time to get used to new ways of doing things. Also, trial basis is historically the way Al-Anon has made changes - giving everyone a chance to speak up, and to get used to new things.

*I agree trial basis runs allows for just that a trial period w input from all

*I agree on a trial run

3. Job Requirements – What skills we might consider requiring of a Technology Coordinator, and what skills may be learnable? How should we divide the duties between Policy (what is not changed) and Procedure (what the Coordinator has autonomy to change)?

Required Skills:

- 1) Basic tools required - high speed internet access, a computer that is running current software and hardware, a smart cellphone that can send and receive email.
- 2) Basic Skills required - a fundamental knowledge of email, web hosting, web site maintenance and document file storage fundamentals

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- 3) Be willing to learn - administration of the G-Suites for non-profits which hosts our afgarea9.org email and document storage. This includes creating and editing email accounts for Area 9 panel officers, and members. Managing documents especially at panel turnover. Enhanced website functions including e-commerce.
- 4) Be willing to support members - helpline type of assistance to members in setting up their email accounts on their devices (computers, tablets and smartphones), other assistance in using and sharing documents and other data. Offer “webinars” or sessions focusing on utilizing the available technology tools.
- 5) Support other panel members in the purchase and use of technology (hardware and software) i.e. working with Archives Coordinator to purchase a document scanner, the purchase of software to support the Legacy Coordinator
- 6) Keeping up with technology - being willing to stay current with changes in technology and how these changes impact Area 9
- 7) Coordination of Information across the Area 9 positions, officers, coordinators, and chairpersons. For an example, Group Records and Technology and Treasurer to exchange information and data so that an online portal for electronic registration at Area events can be effectively used.

Preferred Experience:

- 1) Administrative and/or help desk IT experience
- 2) E-commerce and/or website designer
- 3) Trainer or technical writer

Policies:

- 1) TC position

Procedures:

- 1) **Turnover** - Informing Area officers, co-ordinators, DR's and AISL's and expired event accounts to delete those emails and documents they do not wish to pass on to the next person to hold that position.
- 2) Miscellaneous support to the panel for current technology i.e. video and phone conferencing, sharing documents and other data
- 3) Creating and new email accounts and assisting in setup for new event chairs and respective positions requiring AFGArea9.org emails i.e. Treasurer for convention
- 4) Maintaining website and backups, archiving expired pages and providing to archives for storage
- 5) Creating new pages and adding to navigation bar for AWSC and Assembly, assigning editors that may update those pages i.e. chairperson, delegate
- 6) Creating new pages for events, adding to navigation bar and assigning editors i.e. convention, alateen roundup, etc.
- 7) **E-commerce** support to Area events, current procedures include updating shopping cart settings (bank account, order notification,etc), editing cart items and running order reports
- 8) Assist Chairperson and other Panel members during AWSC and Assembly with technology issues, usually providing personal laptop computer to connect to the projector and display content as is required.
- 9) Assist attendees to AWSC and Assembly with connecting to the hotel WIFI during meetings.
- 10) **(Future) Assist in online registration for AWSC and Assembly as well as reservations for meals and other functions, receiving online payments and generating required reports.**

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11) (Future) Provide and configure software and/or hardware as needed to support the panel election process.

Research here:

Policies versus Procedures:

- I am new to Al-anon service beyond my district so I am still unclear about the difference between Policies and Procedures so I have looked for an explanation that makes sense to me. There is probably an explanation in Al-anon literature somewhere, but I could not locate easily (and this is one of my beefs with the WSO website, a search of policies and procedures gave no results), so I located this from the California University System documents. I have edited the document statement slightly here, but a link to the full document is included.

Determining Whether a Statement is a Policy or a Procedure

Policies are guiding principles that express the organization's culture, goals, and philosophy. Policies promote consistency and operational efficiency, enhance the mission and mitigates significant risk. Policies allow for some discretion by guiding decision making and limiting or setting parameters or choices. Because policies typically require extensive review and area approval, we encourage policy writers to separate policies from procedures in policy documents.

Procedures are step-by-step descriptions of the tasks required to support and carry out organizational policies. Procedures articulate the process for accomplishing controls. Procedures might also document a course of action accomplished in a defined order, ensuring the consistent and repetitive approach to accomplish control activities.

Policies	Procedures
Have widespread application	Have a narrower focus
Are non-negotiable, change infrequently	Are subject to change and continuous improvement
Are expressed in broad terms	Are a more detailed description of activities
Are statements of <i>what</i> and/or <i>why</i>	Are statements of <i>how</i> , <i>when</i> and/or <i>who</i> & sometimes <i>what</i>
Answer major operational issues	Detail a process

Comments:

* in 2010 the checklist of skills included Data storage, email, Presentations, eCommunities, Excel, Word, Conference Calls, video conferencing. What changes in our comfort-level have happened that may adjust this checklist?

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*more of us have had experience w conference calls as members of the 55 panel. Younger members have more Tech knowledge than us older/mature members do generally. The comfort level has increased and resistance has decreased.

*Thanks for the info from the Universe!

4. NFA AFG, Inc. – How and why might the Website be part of the business side of Area? Should it be included more as a part of the Corporation rather than a part of the traditional group of Area? Should the Technology Coordinator be a member of the Board of the Corporation? See the Area Charter, section 11.

*I think the simplest thing is to have the Officers of the Corporation be ultimately responsible to confer with any changes made to the website. That allows flexibility from the Technology Coordinator, but also keeps that position in cooperation with the Area as a whole.

*Personally, I think there should be a few extra members of the Board of Directors of NFA AFG, Inc. However, I have felt quite a lot of pushback so that will probably be a conversation for another day.

Research here

Comments Here

* I think the website, like the bank account and the archives storage, should be a part of our “business expenses” and have some oversight from the Officers/Bd of Directors.

*Maybe the Board could consider in the future that having new members (especially a few Coordinators) on the Board for the business and Traditional cooperation needed.

*As eCommerce becomes more a part of the Area it makes sense to have the Technology Coordinator or an IT presence on the Board.

*The Website straddles both the Corporation and the Area. If we were to incorporate this role into a board member position we are in line with a real world business model - the Corporation is the business end of Area. The website is essential to both. We are hosted for members but the web also allows the AWCS members to do the work of the Area and the Board to do the work of the Board throughout the NFA as opposed to waiting until we can meet.

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*Is there currently no oversight on Technology expenses?

*There is an expense category in the budget, there are no oversight rules. Right now, the items of web hosting fees, and domain registration are handled without discussion as they are considered necessity just like the checking account costs for the treasure, it is a required part of the position to maintain those items. Specific hardware and/or software items are discussed with chairperson and/or treasure. Items of a higher cost (for example we bought a scanner at \$400 for archives) are usually brought before the officers for discussion.

*there is no service structure to support the term “oversight” as commonly used in businesses; instead we use cooperation and coordination. Right now the only type of accountability rests in the Officers who are also the Board of the Corporation. We may not be able to make any changes this panel, but eventually our Area will need to decide on some differentiation between these two groups. To me, “the Officers” is a Traditional Group, elected by Assembly and entrusted with doing Traditional Al-Anon work. But “the Board” is a legal entity entrusted with keeping the corporation in good standing with the law of the land and in cooperation with the Assembly. These are basically two different tasks.

KBDM Questions from Thought Force:

As each member prepares for discussion, keep these questions in mind:

1. What do we know about our members needs, wants and preferences regarding Technology?
2. What do we know about our resources and demographics regarding Technology and the Website?
3. What are the ethical implications of our choices? How do our spiritual principles apply? Pros and cons?
4. What do we NOT know, but wish we did?

Task Force Summary / Findings:

1. Create a new document with the findings from each topic.
2. Clean up this document and post as KBDM (research and information) so that members can see what we based our recommendations on.
3. Have another Conference Call to clarify the recommendations before AWSC

Task Force Recommendation:

Task Force Recommendations are located in the TF Report

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