

NEWSLINE

WE'RE GOING ONLINE

Due to the fellowship's repeated requests for us to wake up and smell the nineties, we've finally made the decision to proceed with setting up a home page on the world wide web. We expect it to be in place by the end of January 1996.

Actually, we have nothing against making use of electronic technology. We completely agree that NA's World Service Office should be keeping up with this technology. However, in our organization, all possible pitfalls and benefits must be researched and measured before we are able to proceed with any new venture.

The World Service Office is, by nature of who we serve, more than just a business making decisions purely for financial or "business-sense" reasons. We operate like a business in many ways, but we are always conscious of our greater responsibility. For instance, it would be completely unacceptable, if we were in business for profit, to spend \$100 to ship free literature to a developing NA community. But because of who we are, we often do just that.

In every decision, we have to weigh projected costs against projected benefit to addicts. We have to consider possible negative consequences to the fellowship, and eliminate or allow for those before we begin. If our decision is about something we have limited experience with, we have to do research, often seeking the opinion of experts, before going ahead. And because our reason for existence as an office is to provide service, we always have to carefully assess how far a new project may stretch our capacity to serve.

Our decision to set up a home page was no exception to any of this. We wanted to design an interesting home page. We had to find out how to get a Web site. We had to carefully gauge the time that staff would devote to monitoring it, counting site visits, and updating information. We had to assure ourselves that we had or could make time for that.

We also have to decide if we will be able to handle incoming e-mail. In this case, we have postponed for the time being a decision about having an e-mail "hot button" on our home page. The reason why we cannot decide is

pretty simple. We guessed at the expected volume, based on our knowledge of the NA fellowship, and by comparing the number of daily posts to the two or three NA recovery/service electronic forums already in existence on the Net. Often, there are more than a hundred posts on each forum per day. Given the amount of employees we currently have, we would be hard pressed to answer each piece of mail, even if we received only half that.

But perhaps weighing even more heavily in thinking about how to handle electronic mail is our belief that the *instant* nature of electronic communication could become a real problem, given the typical concerns of our fellowship. For instance, we receive a great many letters each day that require a lot of thought, sometimes consultation with others, and a carefully worded reply. There is no way we can just "wing off" a half-baked response to the majority of questions and requests we receive. In addition, it is imperative that we keep paper copies of both incoming and outgoing mail for several years.

If we do decide to provide an e-mail address, we will probably have to do it with the stipulation that it will be handled in the same flow as other incoming mail. We will keep you posted as we continue to consider this, and we invite your input.

We're very excited that Narcotics Anonymous will soon have a home page. Our online members will be able to get the latest information about new products, new translations, etc. This will be especially helpful for non-US

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literature in their own language. Professionals looking for a place that can help addicts will be able to find out all about us at the touch of a button.

We'll notify you in the *Newslines*, *The NA Way*, and other publications, of our location on the world wide web as soon as we're set up.

What exactly is a home page?

It is like an e-mail address, which is a place on the Net where people can find you. An e-mail address works like a mail box. A home page is more like your living room, a place people can visit you and find out more about you. Home pages typically include information about the person or organization whose site it is. Various bits of information are accessed by clicking your computer's mouse on "hot buttons" that appear on the computer's monitor. There are often many screens to choose, the first one usually listing general information, others more specific or detailed information.

The Fellowship Intellectual Property Trust and electronic media

The WSO board and executive management are aware that many of our members want to have recovery material online. *On the advice of its intellectual property attorneys, the board must refuse to give permission to post NA literature on the Internet.* At this time, no assurance exists that NA's literature and trademarks are protected from copyright infringement on the Internet. The board is keeping track of the progress of a number of legal cases that involve copyright infringement and the electronic media. If the outcome of these cases results in the board being certain that NA's intellectual property is safe in the electronic media, the board will revisit its decision.

A REPORT ON THE OFFICE/CONVENTION WORKSHOP IN PHILADELPHIA

A combined office/convention workshop was held in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, from 11-13 July 1995. Twenty-six service offices were represented, and more than fifty people were in attendance specifically for the convention portion of the workshop.

Those in attendance learned about what a service office could be and should be, compliance with federal laws, and the appropriate relationship between offices and service committees. It was noted that the relationship between an office and service committee should always be clearly defined in the organization's bylaws. Everyone was encouraged to obtain a copy of the *Guidebook for Directors of Nonprofit Corporations*, published by the American Bar Association. Copies can be ordered by writing to Publications Planning & Marketing, American Bar Association, 750 North Lake Shore Drive, Chicago, IL 60611. WSO executive management and WSO board members shared their experience with developing mission

statements and business plans, emphasizing that developing such tools was essential.

Conventions experience many of the same problems as offices, so the combined focus of this workshop turned out to be very sensible. A great deal of the discussion centered on how to inform and help everyone understand issues of responsibility and accountability at area and regional conventions, and how the Twelve Traditions and Twelve Concepts are applied. This portion of the workshop also emphasized the importance of legal compliance, strategic planning, and developing mission statements.

BRANCH OFFICES

Change in European Branch Office Operations

At the board's August meeting, the European Branch Office Committee was disbanded. The WSO board decided that obtaining input about the operations of the European branch of WSO could be better accomplished by another method. Another decision involving WSO-E was to eliminate the secretarial support that had been provided to the European Delegates Meeting as it was not consistent with the level of support provided to other zonal forums. In other words, no other zonal forum gets secretarial support from WSO staff, so it seemed unfair to provide it to EDM. The office manager is in the final stages of developing a plan that will reduce the operating costs of WSO-E by thirty-five to forty percent.

WSO-Canada

The branch office in Canada has enjoyed smooth operations over the past few years. The board was recently notified that Brian, the office's sole employee, would be resigning due to a relocation. Bob Stewart, the WSO manager responsible for the Canadian branch office, traveled to WSO-Canada to interview the applicants for the open part-time position. A replacement and a backup have been selected and have begun orientation and training.

NA VISITS AA IN NEW YORK

Three WSO staff members recently visited the Alcoholics Anonymous General Service Office in New York. The visit was mostly for the purpose of exchanging information about issues we have in common, and to gain some insight into ways AA has dealt with problems we are now facing. These problems are related to such things as literature distribution, licensing agreements, service structure, translations, copyrights and trademarks, group registrations, setting up archives, and integrating new technology.

One topic we had considerable discussion about was the difference between the service structures of our two fellowships. AA's early development established a course that emphasized autonomy for literature and groups outside North America, while NA has emphasized unity in

