

## What happened to Public Information?

In Narcotics Anonymous (NA) one of the first things that we hear is this, “we can only keep what we have by giving it away.”<sup>i</sup> Our predecessors developed a service structure that was comprised of committees and sub-committees which permitted any and every NA member an opportunity to get involved and give it away. One of these sub-committees that could be found at the Area, Region and World, was/is called Public Information (PI). PI work is still being done but the name was transformed into something that combined a few sub-committees into one entity called Public Relations. We have a public relations policy clearly defined in our Eleventh Tradition indicating we should be primarily concerned with making NA attractive. Keeping what we have through doing PI service work should never be confused with our clearly defined public relations policy.

Our, *It Works: How and Why* book, explains in Tradition Eleven that. “As a fellowship, our primary purpose is to carry the recovery message to the still-suffering addict. To fulfill that primary purpose, we do not need a promotional public relations policy.”<sup>ii</sup> It goes on to indicate “Public information work, done properly, is *not* promotion; rather, it seeks to make NA attractive to those who might need us.”<sup>iii</sup>

In preparation for the 2004 World Service Conference (WSC) the World Board members (WB’s) published the following in that year’s Conference Agenda Report (CAR). “We are completing our first full six-year cycle of the new world service structure implemented in 1998. You may remember that we agreed at that time to work with this new structure for six years before offering any changes to the structure. So the time has come to consider changes, and as your World Board, we have prepared some recommendations for structural change that we think will better serve the fellowship as we move forward.”<sup>iv</sup> One of these recommendations that passed was to “eliminate specific language about standing committees”<sup>v</sup> without having anything prepared to take their place. As a result of eliminating the language about standing committees or sub-committees from our guides, every segment of our Service Structure experienced turmoil, and it would be two full years before something else was proposed.

In 2002 the process for selecting Issue Discussion Topics (IDT’s) at the WSC was re-established by a motion from the WB’s<sup>vi</sup>, insuring that the IDT’s would be proposed, discussed and decided upon primarily by the WB’s at each WSC. The two IDT’s that were approved at the 2004 WSC were Our Public Image and Infrastructure.<sup>vii</sup> Later on the WB’s chose to add two more IDT’s without WSC approval, Atmosphere of Recovery and Leadership.<sup>viii</sup> In the 2004 Conference Approval Track (CAT) the WB’s made the following statement. “Trends in acceptance, visibility, and treatment of addiction will continue to significantly affect the growth of the fellowship. Given this influence on our membership, NA World Services needs to educate and have a strong presence in all sectors of the public to better support the fellowship. Building upon a positive perception of Narcotics Anonymous, we must increase public relations efforts, build strong relationships with groups outside of NA, and stand as the voice of the fellowship.”<sup>ix</sup> This statement by the WB’s appears to contradict the NA approved literature quoted above that states, “we do not need a promotional public relations policy.”<sup>x</sup>

Additionally, the 2004 CAT mentioned how the WB's were planning on accomplishing the work on what was then called "Service Handbooks", which ultimately became the *Public Relations Handbook*. The plan was to spend \$12,000 on a focus group, and hold six workgroup meetings consisting of eight people, hand-picked by the WB's at a cost of \$66,720, for a combined total of \$78,720.<sup>xi</sup>

At the 2006 WSC the WB's and Regional Delegates approved the *Public Relations Handbook*.<sup>xii</sup> It was released ninety days prior to the WSC in the CAT.<sup>xiii</sup> The NA Groups were never given a direct voice on that decision; it was not published in the 2006 CAR. The WB's said this in the 2006 CAR. "We hope, with the *Public Relations Handbook*, not only to offer a handbook that is more up-to-date than the *Public Information* and *Hospitals and Institutions* handbooks presently in our inventory, but to be providing a revision in the sense of seeing things in a new way—a "re-vision."<sup>xiv</sup> The first four chapters were released to the fellowship on May 1st, 2005, chapters five through nine on August 24th, 2005, and chapters ten through thirteen on December 1st, 2005, for ninety-day review and input periods.<sup>xv</sup> Developing material to assist us in making our program as attractive as possible and it was rushed through, in fact the WB's added, "We will be racing to revise these chapters...unlike recovery literature, we are not bound by policy that requires an approval form to be published in advance of the conference."<sup>xvi</sup> The approval of this handbook undid decades of tried and true practices that our predecessors created out of need not money.

Therefore, it appears that the WB's acted hastily when they proposed the elimination of guidelines that were so beneficial to the phenomenal success and growth of our fellowship. Further, the right thing to do would be to return to the committee and sub-committee structure established decades ago. Additionally, calling our efforts at informing the public, PI work, signifies that all our efforts are focused on ways to inform the public, certainly not an effort to create a relationship with any outside organization. With this endeavor we hope to more clearly state the sentiment expressed not only in our Eleventh Tradition but all of our Traditions.

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<sup>i</sup> [Narcotics Anonymous; Basic Text - Chapter Two; Page 9](#)

<sup>ii</sup> [It Works: How and Why, Book Two, Eleventh Tradition; Page 152](#)

<sup>iii</sup> [It Works: How and Why, Book Two, Eleventh Tradition; Page 149](#)

<sup>iv</sup> [2004 WSC Conference Agenda Report; Page 21](#)

<sup>v</sup> [2004 WSC Conference Agenda Report; Page 23](#)

<sup>vi</sup> [2002 WSC Conference Agenda Report, World Board Report; Page 5-6](#)

<sup>vii</sup> [2004 WSC Draft Minutes; Page 46](#)

<sup>viii</sup> [NAWS News, November 2005; Page 8](#)

<sup>ix</sup> [2004 WSC Conference Approval Track; Page 19](#)

<sup>x</sup> [It Works: How and Why, Book Two, Eleventh Tradition; Page 152](#)

<sup>xi</sup> [2004 WSC Conference Approval Track; Page 43-44](#)

<sup>xii</sup> [2006 WSC First Draft Record of Decisions, New Business; Page 43](#)

<sup>xiii</sup> [2006 WSC Conference Approval Track; Page 11-90](#)

<sup>xiv</sup> [2006 WSC Conference Agenda Report; Page 26](#)

<sup>xv</sup> [2006 WSC Conference Agenda Report; Page 27-28](#)

<sup>xvi</sup> [2006 WSC Conference Agenda Report; Page 28](#)