

2016 NERAASA

Panel #6

Public Information

Presentation 1

Pete B., Area 47, Treatment Chair

A recommendation for the implementation of both a Google-Non-Profits account, and a Twitter account for carrying the message of AA to the public.

Good afternoon everyone, my name is Pete and I am an alcoholic. I am currently serving as Area 47, Central New York, Treatment Committee Chair. This is my 8th year in General Service and my 6th year attending NERAASA.

I would like to thank Area 31 for hosting this year's NERAASA, and recognize all the work that they have done to put on this event.

The topic that I am presenting this afternoon is " That a proposal be developed for the implementation of both a Google-Non-Profits account, and a Twitter account for carrying the message of AA to the general public.

While AA has no "official" presence on any social media platforms, one of the first things that I discovered while researching this topic is the pervasiveness of AA related sites that exist on networks such as Facebook, and Twitter

By doing a Twitter search I was able to turn up two Twitter accounts for "Alcoholics Anonymous" there is also at least one Facebook profile for "Alcoholics Anonymous". None of these accounts appear to be malicious, but because they are unofficial they do leave open the possibility of misrepresentation to the public on what AA is, and what it is not.

There are also numerous AA groups, intergroup, ypaas, and individuals that are currently using social media to carry the message, and inform members and potential members of meeting, events, and other happenings.

At its January 30, 2016 meeting, the Trustees Committee on Public Information agreed to forward to the 2016 General Service Conference Committee on Public Information a recommendation that a proposal be developed for the implementation of both a Google-for-Non-Profits account, and a Twitter account to carry the message.

This recommendation came out of work done by the Subcommittee of the 2015 Public Information Comprehensive Media Plan, and much of this presentation borrows heavily from the final report of this committee as published in the 66th General Services Conference Background Information.

Google-Non-Profits is a menu of services offered to any and all qualified non-profit organizations free of charge. The services are bundled and it is not necessary for an entity to use all of these services.

One of these services that the committee found could be useful is the Youtube Non-Profits program. This program provides premium capabilities on Youtube channels. It is the committee's view that the current Alcoholics Anonymous Youtube page could be updated, and we could possibly submit existing PSA's as prerolls.

The official AA Youtube channel was set-up in 2007 and it contains the English, French, and Spanish versions of the PSA "I Thought". As of five days ago it has had a total of seven thousand eight hundred and ten views.

This one PSA exists in a sea of over 57,000 videos on Youtube that the search term "Alcoholics Anonymous" will produce. Of these 57,000 odd videos you will find a myriad of both pro AA and anti AA messages, stories and tutorials. While some of these are informative and well done, others are kind of horrifying, especially the ones done by members who blatantly disregard the 11th tradition.

I must be honest that I had no idea what a preroll was, but I quickly found out that they are those short commercials, that appear prior to the start of a video telling you that it can be skipped after 3 seconds.

Another service that can potentially be utilized through Google-Non-Profits is Google Adwords, a marketing program that can be set-up through keywords to trigger a link to the AA website.

Other services offered are Google Apps for Non-Profits, Google Outreach, and Google Plus.

Twitter is a free micro-blogging site that allows users to network through the sharing of short 140 character messages. Frequently these messages, or tweets, are linked to websites. Organizations often use the Twitter platform as a tool to rapidly increase traffic to their website. In short this platform could potentially serve to link the AA website, or various pamphlets, literature, PSA's, and the Grapevine to individuals and organizations that have an interest in what we have to offer.

Another advantage that Twitter has over other social media platforms is the ability for users to set-up anonymous accounts that could theoretically provide a level of anonymity to anyone choosing to follow an AA account.

It is my belief that the greatest concern to the membership of AA will be how these, or for that matter, any other social media platform can be utilized while still conforming to our principles of anonymity, non-promotion, non-affiliation, and avoidance of controversy.

It is the committee's view that the platforms themselves in no way infringe upon the principle of anonymity, and that it is the actions of individuals that may cause harm to themselves, to others and to AA as a whole. The committee also noted that there is a strong possibility that using these platforms to provide information about anonymity might actually strengthen the principle of anonymity.

In addressing the issue of attraction rather than promotion, it is the committee's view that we have a strong history of addressing this concern. As with all of our current platforms, we would be able to share

what AA is and isn't and about what AA resources are available to help the still suffering alcoholic. What would need to be addressed is not so much the content of our message on social media, but the mechanics of how we can go about adapting print and web content to social media.

In addressing affiliation the committee stated that since the early days of AA our activities have been conducted with other entities without the appearance of endorsement or affiliation. On a daily basis AAers are carrying the message into rehabs and prisons, posting meeting announcements in newspapers, and setting up pamphlet racks in doctors' offices and libraries all without the color of affiliation.

When exploring the issues regarding the terms of services and privacy policies of many social media platforms the committee did not find anything that conflicted with the Traditions, though they did cite that any proposal for the use of a specific platform should ultimately include an ongoing inventory of the applications most recent terms of service.

I would like to end my presentation by stating that the recommendation is for "a proposal to be developed for the implementation of both a Google-Non-Profits account and a Twitter account", it should be noted that this just for the "development of a proposal". I have personally been involved in AA and General Services long enough to recognize that sometimes the mere mention of any change in the way that we carry our message can trigger strong emotions within the fellowship.

In closing I would like to invoke the words of the late science fiction author Douglas Adams, who in his 1999 essay titled *How to Stop Worrying and Learn to Love the Internet* remarked that

- 1) everything that's already in the world when you're born is just normal;
- 2) anything that gets invented between then and before you turn thirty is incredibly exciting and creative and with any luck you can make a career out of it;
- 3) anything that gets invented after you're thirty is against the natural order of things and the beginning of the end of civilization as we know it until it's been around for about ten years when it gradually turns out to be alright really.