

Western Washington Area 72 Standing Web Committee

There is much that must be considered when an AA district decides to develop a website. Issues regarding anonymity, purpose and the 12 Traditions need to be discussed and a group conscience obtained. The following is a basic guide to one process for designing an AA district website.

Purpose/ Audience of website

Gather Information

Each district is autonomous. The needs of a rural website may be different than the needs of an urban website. The most critical step in the entire process is to gather the information about what the users of the site really need and want. A questionnaire is a useful tool. It can be distributed to each GSR and handed out at meetings. It should have clear instructions on its purpose and a time frame for it to be returned. Some members may prefer their opinions be provided through an interview type process rather than writing them out themselves. It is helpful to collect the information from interviews on the same form. The more responses received the more complete your understanding of the requirements of the website. If you know sympathetic non-AA members, your attorney or doctor for instance, they could be contacted also. Some suggested questions may be as follows:

1. Who is this website for? i.e. members of the AA district; drinkers curious about AA; members of other districts; family members of drinkers and non-drinkers curious about AA; treatment professionals; other professionals like doctors, lawyers, mental healthcare providers, etc...
2. What are the key reasons for visiting the website?

3. What information should be available on the website besides the meeting schedule?
4. What actions should the visitor be able to accomplish? e.g. download a flyer about an event, add an event, add/change a meeting, place a telephone call to the hotline, etc...
5. What other input do you have?

Mission Statement, Vision, Objectives, Policies

The mission statement is a short, concise statement of the district's group conscience. It will be the guiding principal for all ultimate decisions regarding the website design. After compilation of all information collected a draft should be written and distributed to the district GSRs and Trusted Servants for their comments. This process should continue until a suitable statement is created and approved by vote at the district business meeting. The Vision is a brief, non-technical description of what the website will be. The Objectives are the concrete features to be used to achieve the Vision. The Policies are the means by which the site will be kept in compliance with the Mission, Vision and Objectives.

Outline the Website

Using the information gathered from the members, an outline of the website can be made showing the major topics. Under each topic can be listed the links and resources available on each page. Common elements on each page may be added to a page

header used on each page. The outline of major headings can be the beginnings of the website navigation element if one is used. Those items determined most important should be made integral parts of the Home Page. The following is a sample outline:

- I. Home Page
 - A. Meeting Schedule
 - B. Events
 - C. Info on AA
 - D. Announcements
- II. Meetings Page
 - A. Schedule
 - B. Info on each meeting
 - C. Add/change meeting
 - D. Maps or directions
- III. Events Page
 - A. Information on events
 - B. Add an event
 - C. Print flyers
- IV. Service
 - A. Service positions
 - B. Contact information
 - C. Service related forms
- V. Literature
 - A. Links to pamphlets
 - B. Links to online books

Design and Development

Ease of use, simplicity and clarity are the design goals. It is usually best to limit the website's functionality to meeting its basic purpose such as meeting schedules and events.

The website can be a very effective tool for the Public Information and Cooperation with the Professional Community committees. Encourage their participation in the design process.

Few people have the ability to build a website from scratch. Using website templates or a Content Management System

such as WordPress, attractive and functional websites can be built with little technical expertise. The design should also allow a growing number of different types of devices to view the website such as smart phones and tablets.

It may be necessary to hire a professional designer if the district doesn't have a member with those abilities. Since the professional will most likely not have an understanding of AA Traditions or Concepts clear direction and monitoring will be important these principles are upheld.

It is possible to receive contributions online from a district website. The GSO website is an example. A group should consider the cost of these services. The most popular service currently being used is Paypal. Discuss the issue thoroughly with your group or district to make sure everyone is fully aware of the fees involved with this type of service.

Launching the Website

When the design has been completed a preliminary version of the website can be made available to a limited number of people for their review and opinion After final modifications have been made the website can be uploaded to the chosen hosting company and made available to the public. The website is another way AA makes itself available to the still suffering alcoholic. Adding the district website to printed meeting schedules and adding it to the flyers for AA functions will help alcoholics find it online. If AA has an Intergroup or Area website determine if it would be possible to link to these already established AA websites.