

AA Anonymity and Members' Security While Using Technology

Updates and Solutions

February 8, 2020

Area 12 - Delaware

National AA Technology Workshop

- Members of the Fellowship – technologists, public information and product specialists – trusted servants all – gathered in Bowling Green, KY to discuss issues regarding the cultural changes brought about by technology.
- “We have experienced a technical immersion!” – members are deeply embedded in various technology systems and applications.
- New ways of reading, purchasing and providing services.
- New methods of interacting with society, especially with members of our Fellowship

And now the question:

How is (a technology) changing the way that people (something people do), and how does this affect AA?

In 1960 Bill W. spoke at the General Service Conference:

“We live in an era of change. Our Twelve Steps won’t change; the Traditions not at all likely. But our manner of communication, our manner of organizing ourselves for function, for service – let us hope that this goes on changing for the better, forever. We must readapt, we must re-shift – that has been our history.”

AA Culture Changed by Technology

- 3.3 billion social media users worldwide, representing over 42% of the population;
- 48 percent of Baby Boomers (ages 55-73)
- 77.5 percent of Generation X (ages 39-54)
- 90.4 percent of Millennials (ages 23-38)
- Globally, digital customers spend 2 hours and 22 minutes per day on social networks and messaging.
- So: How is Social Media changing the way people think about anonymity and how might this affect AA and AA members?

Social Media and Anonymity

63rd GSC affirmed the internet social media and all forms of communication are implicit in Traditions 11 and 12.

The internet of today is NOT the same as press, radio, tv and films of yesterday.

PRTF was never used as a medium for regular people to connect with others on a daily or hourly basis.

Telling someone to be anonymous online could be like telling a teen in the 1980's to be anonymous on the telephone.

Anonymity, Security and Privacy are now our challenges.

Social Networks, 5G Networks and Integration

More data is generated by and collected from our everyday activities.

Things around us are predicting our behaviors.

We are becoming more embedded.

But we need more solutions for individuals to help protect the greater good – and we do have solutions.

Solutions for Online Issue

- Never acknowledge membership in your 12-step program online;
- When posting pictures of you with other members of the Fellowship try not to identify them as members or with a last initial or name;
- Posting a picture of a sobriety medallion means you're a member of a 12-step Fellowship and violates both the 11th and 12 Traditions;
- Sending emails to other members regarding 12-step activities best serves everyone when using the BCC line – you're not only protecting anonymity, you're also protecting others' privacy;
 - Phone numbers and emails on flyers is a bad idea.

Timelessness

- All of our efforts to reach out – no matter how novel or technological – have the goal of bringing the still suffering alcoholic into our rooms so they can talk in person to other alcoholics and hear experience, strength and hope.
- Be cautious of the parameters of online “closed” meetings – is there one individual responsible for entry to the group; are the questions to join or qualify reasonable and within the boundaries of our Traditions; is information about members circulated ; is private information exchanged via standard email or group text messages – be careful! PS – invitations show other members most times.

We have no dues or fees, but we sometimes collect money . . .

- Use vendors that do not retain information that is captured;
- Ensure that when names and addresses are furnished that mailing lists are not created by the sponsoring group or the vendor;
- Ensure that when names and emails and phone numbers are furnished that lists are not created, and stored by the sponsoring group or the vendor;
- Electronic commerce in various forms have fees associated -- price more than one vendor to compare both prices and privacy.