

THE GENERATION OF FUNDS (FUNDRAISING) AND THE SEVENTH TRADITION IN NARCOTICS ANONYMOUS

(Standard statement about when article was written, etc. would be placed here.)

Questions about fundraising, and how fundraising relates to the traditions, especially Tradition Seven, *Every N.A. group ought to be fully self-supporting, declining outside contributions*, have been asked on numerous occasions in the past few years. As groups, areas, and regions grow, the perceived need for finances to help fulfill the Fifth Tradition, *Each group has but one primary purpose - to carry the message to the addict who still suffers*, may also grow. When the cost of ancillary services, such as helplines, meeting lists, literature for use in H&I meetings, among others, is considered, many groups, areas and regions find themselves in the position of needing, or wanting, more funds than are provided by members' donations to the "basket" at the group level. It is at these times that questions arise as to how to fund the services to help carry our message to the still-suffering addict. This article will attempt to answer some of those questions, as well as offer some simple guidelines about raising funds. We will essay to provide a brief, historical perspective on fundraising in N.A., look at some of the problems that may result from various efforts, and strive to show the relationship of Tradition Seven to this issue.

In looking at this topic, it is helpful to understand how fundraising started in our fellowship. Many early groups held a variety of activities such as dinners, picnics, and other social events to promote recovery, unity, and a sense of belonging. While these activities were not intended to raise funds, a number of them turned out to be financially successful, allowing the host group to purchase additional literature or other supplies for their meetings. As the fellowship grew, and the need, or want, for additional services became greater, the purpose for some of these activities changed from being focused on a celebration of recovery to becoming more aimed toward raising funds to meet these needs or wants.

As the fellowship continued to grow, and more area and regional service committees were formed, the focus continued to change, in some instances, in order to make up for the perceived lack of funds donated from the groups' Seventh Tradition collections. As time went on, more and more service committees began to rely upon this form of funding, reaching the point, at times, where the success or failure of an event such as a convention determined that area's or region's ability to provide services and participate in the fund-flow. In other instances, groups, areas, and regions had such success with their social events that they began to put an extraordinary amount of time and effort into these activities, and becoming invested in having a "successful" convention, dance, or camp-out.

A considerable number of problems arose from such practices. Accountability of the service committees to the groups were affected as the committees began to rely upon these events for their funding, instead of relying upon the contributions from the groups' Seventh Tradition collections. In some

cases, the various service bodies began to get diverted from their original purpose by "money, property, and prestige." Some groups and service committees began to amass prudent reserves, which, in some cases, became hundreds if not thousands of dollars. For some groups and committees, this prudent reserve grew into such an extraordinary amount that the body holding it would not have to rely upon contributions for upwards of six months or more, despite the fact that in various fellowship service publications the recommended amount of prudent reserve is one month's expenses. Merchandising efforts became in some cases a "business," getting away from the spiritual focus of our program. It became harder and harder to insure that donations to our fellowship came only from our members at various social events. And, some members began to raise concerns that we may be perceived by those outside our program as a fellowship that is more involved with social functions and merchandising efforts than helping addicts to recover from the disease of addiction. As these problems became apparent, members began to share their concerns, and started questioning the need for such practices. Some of the questions included the relationship between Tradition Seven and fundraising.

While this tradition specifically talks about self-support--declining donations from outside sources--some of the principles contained within the tradition, such as simplicity and faith, may prove to be of some assistance in answering such questions. Our experience has shown that as recovering addicts, all of our needs add up to the need for ongoing freedom from active addiction. To attain this freedom, we need the principles contained in the Twelve Steps and the Twelve Traditions of N.A., recovery meetings where we can share our experience, strength, and hope, and other recovering addicts to help us work these spiritual principles in our lives. These three things are simple in nature; they do not require us to obtain college degrees, nor to expend vast sums of money.

In our active addiction, most of us seemed to have one thing in common; self-centeredness. As we begin the recovery process, we learn that we "keep what we have by giving it away." We start to learn the value of being a contributing member of our fellowship, and society as a whole. We begin to learn the simple truth that if we want to keep attending N.A. meetings, and help to carry the message, we need to contribute our fair share, financially, as well as with our time and energy. Self support, within the context of Tradition Seven, goes far beyond financial support. Along the way, we learn that contributing our fair share is one way of expressing our gratitude for what was so freely given to us. Over time, we learn to develop the faith that as long we are doing what we're supposed to--practicing the principles of our program--the God of our understanding will take care of us, and show us a new way to live.

When looking at the needs of the group, simplicity once again comes to mind. Our needs are simple: a place where we can hold our meetings, literature to help carry our message, and in most cases, simple refreshments. We do not need spacious, luxurious meeting facilities, excessive quantities of literature, or refreshment of every type available to attract addicts to our meetings. The simplicity of our message and the effectiveness of our program is sufficient. We

do not need large amount of reserves if we have faith that the God of our understanding will take care of our needs. Our experience has shown that when a group's financial needs are not met, and that fact is communicated to the members, it is generally taken care of. The simplicity of our needs is further enhanced by the simplicity of our primary purpose--to carry the message to the addict who still suffers. Our experience has shown that it is essential that we do this simple task well, for it contains the very essence of who we are and what we do. If everything we do is to fulfill that purpose, we have discovered that, generally, we will find the funds necessary to do what we must.

One viewpoint regarding the entire topic of fundraising is advocated by many groups and service committees who have decided to avoid controversy by simply seeking to carry the message to the addict who still suffers. In this manner, they rely solely on attracting new members to their groups by strengthening their personal recovery, working N.A.'s Twelve Steps and living them. As new members are attracted, groups grow, Seventh Tradition collections increase, and more money is available for group needs. Accordingly, excess funds are accumulated and passed on to the area, then to the region, then to world services as per our suggested fund-flow system. (For further information on this topic, please refer to IP #24, "Hey! What's the basket for?") As services are funded more efficiently, the N.A. message of recovery is carried farther and better than ever before. The result is more addicts seek recovery through Narcotics Anonymous and more N.A. meetings begin. This approach is seen as practical and realistic by many members of our fellowship. These members have reported that the frustration and sense of urgency for money can be counterbalanced by the spiritual unity which results.

One of the things that have, however, become evident over the past few years, is that large segments of the fellowship want activities and merchandise. If we don't assist in these efforts, then members may end up doing it on their own. When people do these things on their own, the resulting problems have considerable impact on all elements of N.A. and our success in achieving our primary purpose. We strongly believe that fundraising activities which divert us from the spiritual nature of our program are inappropriate, and should not be encouraged within the fellowship. Social activities designed to enhance recovery and further unity and members' sense of belonging, however, are not only acceptable but should be encouraged.

While we recognize that passing the "basket" is, in itself, a form of raising funds fundraising for its own purpose is, at best, questionable. There may, however, be those times when a group or service committee finds itself in extraordinary financial constraints, and needs to begin considering the possibility of holding a fundraiser. At these times, we suggest that all those affected by this issue carefully consider all aspects and hold discussions to determine whether the funds collected from Seventh Tradition donations are enough to support their actual needs, and, in fact, wants are supplanting financial needs, or if the need for the fundraiser is truly of such a nature that not holding it will result in services, designed to help fulfill our primary purpose, not being delivered.

When these events are held, the hosting group or service committee should examine the event with respect to all our traditions and lend their collective experience, strength, and hope to these examinations. One of the major points to inventory is the motivation for holding such an event. An examination, such as this, is part of what keeps us in tune with our principles. The following general concepts have arisen from the experience of our fellowship and we present them here as starting points for your consideration:

1. Fundraising activities at an N.A. meeting are not usually appropriate because they may detract from our primary purpose and can present an inaccurate impression of the N.A. message, especially in the eyes of the newcomer, or non-addict visitors.
2. In order to follow the guidance of our traditions, a fundraising event should necessarily be planned and held by and for Narcotics Anonymous members.
3. In order to conform to the ideal of the Seventh Tradition, donations from non-members should not be knowingly accepted.
4. Since there are often times when we sponsor activities where there is a fixed charge for full participation, the term "donation" should not be associated with these types of fees. In this way, we are not confusing contributions with assessed charges for activities.
5. Consideration must be given to determining whether the local N.A. community is willing and large enough to support the event.
6. All aspects of the fundraising event should be consistent with encouraging recovery from addiction. In this respect, events which might encourage gambling, "something for nothing", or non-recovery oriented prizes or attractions are seen by many as not within the purview of our spiritual fellowship. (e.g. a raffle prize such as a car, T.V., etc. might contribute to someone's lifestyle, but at the same time may not be directly related to their recovery, whereas a prize of N.A. literature or tickets to an N.A. workshop or convention would be recovery oriented.) It should also be noted that, in many U.S. states and in some other countries, such raffles are illegal. It may also be helpful to consider whether raffles--and especially cash raffles or lotteries--appeal more to the spirit of self interest, rather than inspiring the spirit of voluntary support implicit in our Seventh Tradition.

Finally, all of the solutions we see to the problems listed within this article involve communication. We believe that improved communication about the needs of the service bodies involved would result in increased support from the groups and members. Improved communication would help the accountability of the service structure to the groups, and the members. In closing, we believe that improved communication would help us to maintain our orientation on spiritual principles, such as faith and trust, instead of fear, distrust, and self-centeredness.

DIRECT CONTRIBUTIONS

At last year's World Service Conference, a number of motions were referred for recommendation to the World Service Board of Trustees. Among them were two motions related to the direct funding of NA services by NA groups:

"That the WSC encourage funding all levels of service by direct group contributions."

"That the WSC create a translations fund which only groups and individuals can make direct donations to.

1. The fund to be administered by the WSO.

2. Priorities for translations to be determined by the Translations Committee."

After careful consideration, we have decided to support the concept of direct group contributions rather than the current "funds flow" model. We believe a direct contribution plan stands a better chance than "funds flow" of providing adequate funds to each level of our service structure while at the same time maintaining group autonomy, reinforcing the responsibility and authority of the NA group in service matters, providing motivation for regular fellowshipwide communication and service accountability, and promoting NA unity. However, we do *not* believe that earmarking direct contributions for specific purposes--whether for H&I, PI, or translations--allows the service structure sufficient flexibility to effectively coordinate the responsibilities assigned to it.

The earliest editions of our fellowship's service manual recommended direct group contributions to each level of service. Those manuals suggested that, after a group had paid its bills and set aside a little extra money for emergency use, "excess funds should be diverted to help NA as a whole. A group can do this by contributing to the area or regional committees which serve the group or through contributions directly to the World Service Office of Narcotics Anonymous."

It wasn't until 1982, when the World Service Conference approved a revision of the service manual sections on the group, area, and region, that groups were encouraged to donate all their excess funds to the area committee. Area committees were then to donate *their* excess funds to the region, and the region's excess was to flow on to the world. This is the "funds flow" plan for funding NA services.

34 Various problems have been noted over the years with the "funds flow" plan.
35 First, the *funds* often *don't flow*; they are frequently used up at the area or
36 regional levels, leaving little or nothing to fund regional or World Service
37 Conference operations. At the regional level, this has led to increasing
38 dependence on profits from fundraising activities such as conventions, dances,
39 memorabilia sales, and NA literature markups, and decreasing reliance on group
40 support. At the world level, this has produced a stagnant budget and periodic
41 shortfalls at a time when global NA growth rates are exploding.

42 Direct group contributions to all levels of service may provide a more stable
43 financial base for our service structure. Each group would decide what
44 proportion of its excess funds it would contribute to its area committee, its
45 regional committee, and its World Service Conference. Each level of service
46 would be guaranteed a source of income as stable as the NA Fellowship itself.
47 With this stability, service committees might be able to reduce their reliance on
48 fundraising activities for operating income, thereby increasing their ties directly to
49 the NA groups they serve.

50 Certainly, if an area committee found in any given month that it had surplus
51 funds, it would be encouraged to directly donate them to other levels of service.
52 The same would apply to contributions of regional surpluses to the World Service
53 Conference. However, if an area or regional committee experienced surpluses
54 month after month, it would probably want to inform the groups it served of the
55 situation so that those groups could adjust their contributions accordingly. This
56 would maintain the integrity of the direct contribution system while making
57 allowance for periodic cash flow fluctuations.

58 Direct group contributions would reinforce the autonomy of the NA group.
59 Each group would determine for itself how much it would give to each element of
60 the service structure, based on its own evaluation of how well those elements
61 were meeting the group's needs and the needs of NA as a whole. Our groups
62 have created a service structure to serve their collective needs in better carrying
63 the message and should have responsibility for and authority over that structure.
64 A direct group contributions policy puts the groups in a better position to carry out
65 that responsibility and provides them with the greatest opportunity to financially
66 impact the service structure.

67 If the groups were funding each level of service directly, all service bodies
68 would be encouraged to communicate effectively and directly with the groups.
69 This would allow groups the most flexibility in deciding where their money goes. If
70 groups were not aware of the work or needs of a particular service body, the

71 chances would be great that they would choose not to participate in funding that
72 body. Direct funding would also provide a way for each level of service to
73 determine the level of support they had from the groups. If funds were not
74 coming in, service committees would be able to infer one of three things: either
75 the groups didn't have the money available, the groups didn't understand or
76 know about what services had been requested, or the groups didn't support the
77 work that was being done. As you can see, direct funding would also give the
78 groups a greater opportunity to make their voice heard in service matters.

79 This is not to suggest that groups earmark contributions for translations, PI,
80 H&I, or any other special purposes. The groups have created the service
81 structure not only to deliver services on their behalf, but to *coordinate* those
82 services. In delegating to the service structure the authority necessary to fulfill its
83 responsibilities, the groups have also delegated the authority to coordinate the
84 allocation of service resources at each level of service.

85 In studying the financial condition and means of funding employed by several
86 other fellowships, it became obvious that we are not alone in facing a money
87 crunch at all levels of service. Direct contributions are not a magic answer that will
88 relieve us of all our financial concerns. However, if we truly believe that the
89 solution to our financial difficulties rests with our membership, then it makes sense
90 to put the responsibility and ability to impact finances directly in the hands of our
91 groups.

92 These recommendations are provided for information purposes only; they are
93 not intended as a mandate given by the World Service Board of Trustees to the
94 fellowship. However, having been asked to evaluate the benefits of the current
95 "funds flow" plan in comparison to direct group contributions to each level of
96 service, we believe that direct contributions provide greater financial stability,
97 enhance group autonomy, responsibility, and authority, encourage better
98 communications between the service structure and the groups, provide more
99 direct means of service accountability, and better promote the NA unity upon
100 which our personal recovery depends.