

Eastern Counties Area of Narcotics Anonymous

Analysis and Proposition “Let Us Love You Until You Can Love Yourself”

Purpose: To identify the cause and propose a solution to the dwindling attendance to N.A. meetings.

In recent years the Eastern Counties Area of the Narcotics Anonymous has experience a noticeable decline in attendance to N.A. meetings. In the spirit of keeping current meetings open for the addict who is still suffering with the disease of addiction, this paper is written to produce a proposal, from a personal perspective, to help create a plan to create attraction to the program.

Identifying the problem:

The Snubbing of Ideas

A lot of member on N.A., especially new members, are usually very eager to serve and help give ideas on better ways to improve the attraction of the program. Brain storming from a group can increase the chances of obtaining an idea that can greatly benefit and solve issues that the Area may currently be experiencing. Unfortunately, one too many times we have seen an older member or those in the serving body snuff out any new ideas by making difficult for the ideas to be heard.

Many members may have great ideas they want to present them to the area but are usually met with a lot of verbal red tape with responses such as:

“This isn’t the right time for that” or;

“You need to take that to the sub-committee first” or;

“Are you willing to do that? If not, sit down” or;

“We don’t have time to hear that right now” or;

“That’s an old or new business issue and we already did that” ...etc.

We tend to forget who our audience is, addicts. Not all members of N.A. are willing or able to participate in a solution they have presented but that doesn’t make the idea any less valuable. A serving body that is serious about solutions will take and consider the solution regardless of whether or not the presenter can or is willing to participate in the solution himself. The serving body should, in the interest of the Area as a whole, make it easier to receive new ideas and proposed solutions during the GSR Area meetings without referring to the area guidelines as an idea snubber weapon. Keep in mind that guidelines are just that, a guideline to help guide and or not set of unbreakable rules.

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First Impressions to the New Comers, Let Us Love You

First impressions at a job interview is the deciding factor between getting or losing that job you want regardless of the very valuable skills you possess. It is no different in N.A. when that new comer comes for the first time to one of our meetings. In essence, we are being interviewed by the new comer and our first impression will determine whether that new comer will stay or never come back regardless of the wonderful lifesaving program we have to offer.

Many will exclaim, "I am here to save my ass" or "They need to hit rock bottom" or "Shut the fuck up and listen" or, "You need tough love" or, the ultimate favorite "You need to be called on your shit." These are just a few responses among a sea of discouraging phrases. Although all of these exclamations may be true for the member who is stating it, whose life was once unmanageable, we forget about the emotional state in which we arrived. We got here feeling distress, alone, unloved, paranoid, lost, defeated, etc.. To sum these feelings up, we felt vulnerable and extremely sensitive.

When a new comer comes into a meeting, need to extend our love through the message we deliver. We need to reframe for criticizing or exposing the programs shortcomings in front of the whole group that includes people attending for the first time. As the trusted servants of the Eastern Counties Areas, we must be more conscientious of these repelling messages sent to the addict attending for the first time. On the preface of the story on page 187 titled "Restored to Dignity," it states: "She walked into NA-literally-and was treated with more love and respect than she ever had been." Further on page 189 paragraph 2, she stated that she was "treated better than any had before."

I feel that giving this warm welcome is one of areas in which we are lacking and failing to project to the new comers and in essence destroying the attraction to the program. We, as the appointed service members need to get this message out to other meetings but we must begin by being that example. As the addict in the "Restored to Dignity" stated, "When I got to my first meeting, I was dirty, alone and afraid. But I felt the care and concern of the members I had met, and I wanted more." We want them to want more because that's how new comers stay.

Missionaries Wanted

As part of our commitment to the addict who still suffers is to give away what was so freely given to us and through this, we help ourselves stay clean. On page 161, the story titled "Start a Meeting, They Will Come" talks about a man who started a meeting where there was none available. The man "stays clean through his own growing pains and those of the fellowship." We forget that a fellowship is a group of people with a common problem who help each other stay clean and those people become your second family through the friendships developed through that commonality. Being part of the service for is more than just doing being in service boards, we are the example for others and others look to us for that guidance.

We also tend to confuse a successful meeting by the number of people that attend. Success is determined by your own personal success to stay clean and the others that keep coming back because of your proof that it can be done, regardless of the number that attend, you have a successful meeting. The meetings are built through persistence, and by example and the love you project to others. We, as part of our service should each commit to open a new

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meeting where there are none available, whether it is an area or a time slot. When people see the serenity to achieve by being of service to others, they become more inclined to do the same. That is what we call attraction rather than promotion. On Page 365 titled "The good with do" led an addict to realize that "our acts of service can have far-reaching effects."

The Visits

One issue that has come up many times is the lack of donations from meetings to the area. There are many reasons why meetings may not be giving, small number of attendees, a distrust of the service area, or unsure what the donations are used for. We need our board members to make a commitment to visit every meeting so the members of those meeting can meeting them and learned about what ECANA does for them. We have 34 active meetings in the Eastern Counties Area and it makes it quite challenging for one person to go to all of them but those meetings can be divided by the number of board members. That responsibility should be shared by the chair and vice chair of public relations. It is important that it is the people that lead take this responsibility so members can meet those that represent them and those that can answer their questions directly. It is easy to delegate these visits to others but that defeats the purpose of those visits.

Suggested Solutions:

- I. Eliminate the red tape when it comes to presenting ideas by members whose intent is to improve the area. Become more flexible during the GSR meetings and break away from the strictly business attitude because of time constraints or procedural red tape. Be willing to plan and execute the idea if it makes sense and will help the N.A. area as a whole, even if the idea originator is unable to participate.
- II. Create an area learning day in which people with service positions can learn, as a suggestion, to make meetings more attractive to new comers through message they project to others. Avoid using negative language at meetings that makes being of service a burden and instead use language that encourages but people to see the satisfying feeling that comes from it.
- III. Encourage all sub-committee members to open a new meeting by being the example. Show the addict one addict that walk through those that the program works through being of service so they become more willing to do the same. Measure the meetings success by your person clean time and those of others and not by the number of people that attend.
- IV. Have the board members and chair and vice-chair visit each meeting in our area to inform the members of each meeting of the services their donations provide to them. Encourage the service board members, and the PR chairs, to do the visit themselves and not delegate those visits to others so meeting members can have their questions answered directly from those who decided how their donations are spent. The visits are an opportunity to create trust and excitement for members to join being of service.

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Un-serviced and Unclaimed Territory

Unserviced Territory

- Huntington Park
- Bell
- Bell Gardens
- Cudahy
- South Gate
- Lynwood
- Walnut Park

