

First Pre-conference Meeting
March 9th, 2024
First Topic

1) Carrying the A.A. Message, the Media, Money, Spirituality, the Future...

The use of the traditional media of press, radio and television is in constant decline since the emergence of social media and streaming platforms.

Streaming is the continuous transmission of audio or video files from a server to a client. In simpler terms, streaming is what happens when consumers watch TV or listen to podcasts on Internet-connected devices.

A conference advisory action in 2021 called for research into the feasibility of paid placement of Public Service Announcement (PSA) videos on streaming platforms.

In 2023, the General Service Office (GSO) approached several providers and developed a plan detailing the target audiences that could reach the suffering alcoholic. Proposals were submitted by 6 possible suppliers (Connect 360 Multimedia; Moore Marketing; VNR1 Communications, Williams Whittle agency, PlowShare Marketing, Public Service Network).

To put a figure on it, Connect 360 Multimedia would cost more or less \$60,000 per year to target an American, Latin American and Canadian audience. By comparison, other platforms like Amazon would cost \$26,250 for two months for 346,000 views, Hulu at \$53,900 for 350,000 views over two months, and so on.

At the moment, we're just estimating costs. No contracts have been signed, but that's where we're headed. We don't really have a choice if we want to reach the still suffering alcoholic who doesn't know there's a solution to his problem called Alcoholics Anonymous.

In 2024, the agenda of the General Service Conference's Public Information Committee (GSCPIC) is especially focused on developing new ways to reach the still suffering alcoholic. 12 of the 15 items on the Committee's agenda are directly related to this issue. The issue of anonymity on social media was added on February 29, 2024.

Until recently, the use of PSAs on TV and other media has been cost-neutral. For TV, for example, the media value of the ads that aired in 2022 across the U.S./Canada conference was just over \$34 million US. The AA messages that are aired fill unoccupied time slots, unsold advertising slots. So, stations air free public service announcements to fill these slots, including the PSAs produced by Alcoholics Anonymous. So, paying broadcasters to display ourselves on their streaming platforms is a first in the Fellowship's history.

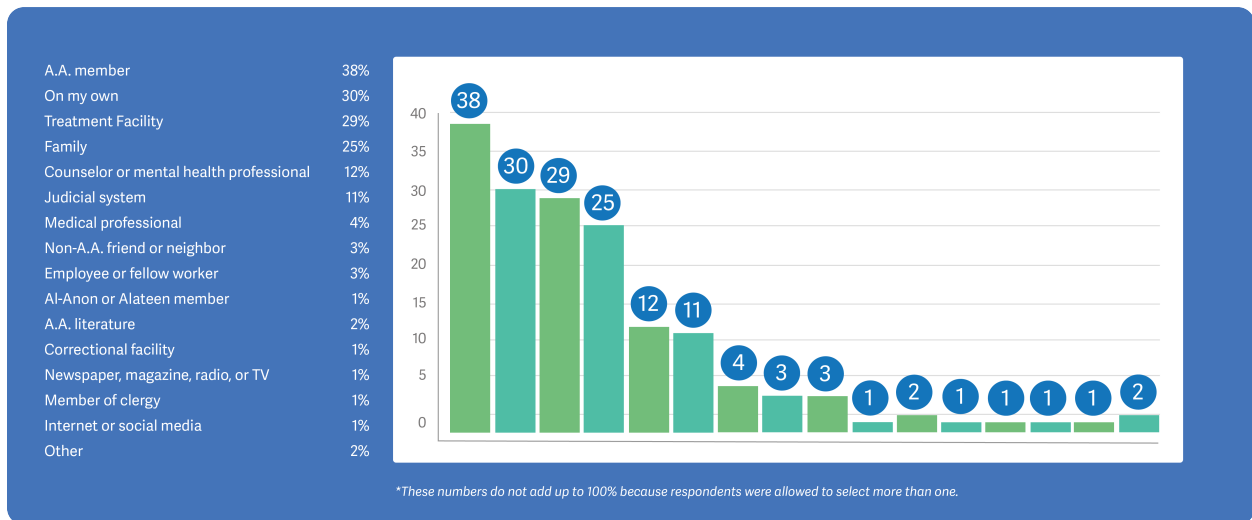
Investing in these resources is currently at the testing and evaluation stage. The spirit behind this approach is one of caution. In 2024, the GSCPIC will review the results of the work undertaken and make recommendations for further action.

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There is a project to distribute public service announcements in over 2,000 pharmacies in the United States through the « Mesmerizing Point" platform. This project ran for one year as of July 2023. The GSCPIC expects a progress report on Mesmerize Point at the 2024 Conference. Also, on the subject of streaming platforms, the Committee will be asked to discuss the progress report on paid placement of video PSAs on streaming platforms.

There's one item I'd like to bring to your attention in order to obtain your impressions.

In September 2023, the results of the 2022 Member Survey were published by the GSCPIC. One of the charts that was presented answered the question " How did you find out about AA?"



Of the responses, 1% of respondents said they had learned about AA via the Internet or social media. The 2022 result for this question is the same as in 2014. On the other hand, 70% said they had found out about AA through AA members or on their own. The various other channels through which our members came to AA ranged from their doctor, a mental health professional, non-AA friends, Al-Anon, etc., amounting to just under 30%.

At first glance, then, it would seem the impact of the Internet and social media on membership is rather minimal.

This 1% result can lead us to think narrowly. We all know from experience that we were probably influenced in various ways to decide to join AA. For example, someone saw something about A.A. and passed the message on to an individual who may have passed it on to family, or who may have received it from a doctor. Eventually, that doctor may have seen the message somewhere and told a patient who obviously has a

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problem, and so on. The chain of causes can be more complex than a simple click on the Internet or social media. So we need to put this 1% number into perspective, because we could rightly say that the Conference is wasting its time and not investing in the right place. Let's just remember that at Conference level, 1% represents more or less 16,000 members. This is certainly not to be overlooked.

What, then, should be said about the substantial investment in resources that the Conference foresees for new media projects? On the other hand, all this may seem disproportionate. Many of us, if not a large majority, agree that we need to move forward and modernize. We have no choice.

Collectively as AAs, we recognize the importance of moving forward digitally, and we're only at the beginning. In recent years, the issue has become even more pressing. We need only think of the direction our area has taken since the end of the pandemic by investing significantly in our computer equipment and the digital economy.

On another issue, a message from the G.S.O. General Manager to all Conference members on November 17, 2023 informed us that, according to the 2023 forecasted budget, the G.S.O. was expected to incur a loss of \$997,000.

At the time, the General Manager asked us for an additional voluntary contribution to continue adapting our Fellowship to today's needs. By the end of 2023, the goal of making up for the projected 2023 shortfall had been achieved.

On January 25, 2024, the General Manager wrote again and was more insistent, stating that it would be necessary for everyone to consider a more sustained additional effort over time.

The current issue is that the reserve fund stood at 6.27 months of operation at the end of January 2024, when it should ideally be between 9 and 12 months.

The past few years have been difficult financially, and no one has escaped them. Even AA has had to adapt to this new reality. Carrying the A.A. message "is the basic service that the A.A. Fellowship provides; this is our primary purpose and the main reason we exist" Bill teaches us in the A.A. Service Manual.

So, when it comes to the question of money in A.A., should we take a strict bookkeeper's approach to our Twelfth Step work, or should we consider the money aspect in spiritual terms of lives saved?

Ultimately, what should be understood from this discussion of this topic is that, if in 2023 I contributed, let's say \$500 for the Seventh Tradition, am I prepared in 2024 to give, \$550 (10% more)? Am I, as an individual member, prepared to give more? As the

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July 26 Daily Reflection asks, "So, how much is my sobriety and my inner peace worth?"

Are we aware of the fact that if we keep on modernizing how we carry our message of hope, we'll have to contribute more to our Seventh Tradition?

And for the future of A.A., are we collectively willing and ready to pay the price to reach one's who needs to hear our message, wherever he or she may be?

Prepared by :

André D.
Delegate A87/P74
Alcoholics Anonymous