

PREPARING FOR THE ELEVENTH CONCEPT OF SERVICE

(Read pp. 51-63 of the “Twelve Concepts for World Service”)

THE ELEVENTH CONCEPT OF SERVICE: We serve with quality and dedication.

Let us prepare for the study of the eleventh concept of service by examining the quality and dedication of our service.

1. Am I serving in A.A. to the best of my ability and dedication as a sponsor, speaker or leader?
2. Am I pursuing the steps, traditions, and concepts of service with my best effort?
3. What is the quality of my love in relationships? How dedicated am I at work? Do I pursue my other talents with quality and dedication or half-heartedly?
4. Is there a difference in the quality and dedication of my service when I contribute help directly, or when I assist you in being of service? Do I serve better if I am in charge, rather than helping others give service?

“UNITY INSURES RECOVERY THROUGH SERVICE”
MEETING OF ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS

**THE ELEVENTH CONCEPT OF SERVICE:
We serve with quality and dedication¹.**

Homework: Writing Inventory on the Eleventh Concept of Service
By Dennis F.

How do I measure my service in A.A.? This concept suggests that I inventory the quality I give to the tasks God gives me, and the dedication in which I go about performing these tasks.

Do I prepare myself through prayer and meditation before each session I spend with someone I sponsor? Will I speak with the same dedication at a meeting with five people as I do at a meeting of over a hundred people?

What about quality and dedication in my home and work life? Will I make amends or change or do whatever is necessary in my program to maintain the quality of my love relationships? Will I not be content with an acceptable level of performance in my job when I know I could do an assignment better if I spent more effort on it?

Do I examine my day and plan to do my toughest job first? The toughest job for me is to write inventory and work the step, tradition, or concept of service I am on in my program of spiritual growth. Successes in A.A. do things that failures don't like to do.

I also want to examine how I can be of service to you in helping you give quality and dedicated service. Am I as willing to go to any length to help you do a good job, as I am to do a good job for myself? Will I take the time and trouble to share whatever experience, strength, and hope that I might have that you might want?

Bill now comments on the importance of quality and dedication in A.A. since the “lack of these characteristics, will make or break our structure of service.” The reading then names the twelve standing committees of the General Service Board.

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While the trustees hold final responsibility for A.A.'s world service administration, they should always have the assistance of the best possible standing committees, corporate service directors, executives, staffs, and consultants. Therefore, the composition of these underlying committees and service boards, the personal qualifications of their members, the manner of their induction into service, the systems of their rotation, the way in which they

¹ The wording of the “concepts” as given here is an interpretation by Dennis Fitzpatrick.

are related to each other, the special rights and duties of our executive, staffs, and consultants, together with a proper basis for the financial compensation of these special workers, will always be matters for serious care and concern.

The long-time success of our General Service Board will rest not only on the capabilities of the trustees themselves; it will depend quite as much upon the competent leadership and harmonious association of those non-trustee committee members, corporate service directors, executives, and staff members who must actively carry on A.A.'s world services. Their quality and dedication, or their lack of these characteristics, will make or break our structure of service. Our final dependence on them will always be great indeed.

Fortunately, we already have a sound internal structure of service in which a very competent group of non-trustee servants is now working. Only a few refinements and changes will still be needed in A.A. World Services, Inc., and at The A.A. Grapevine, Inc., the latter being a comparatively recent comer to our service scene. (The first issue was June, 1944.) The main outlines of this underlying structure are now defined, and the effectiveness of this arrangement has been well proved. Of what, then, does our underlying structure of service consist?

It is composed of the following elements: the five (now twelve) standing committees of the General Service Board, plus our two active service corporations, A.A. World Services, Inc. (including its A.A. publishing division), and The A.A. Grapevine, Inc. Let's have a look at each of these operations. The standing committees of the General Service Board are Nominating, Finance and Budgetary, Public Information, Literature, and Policy (the name of the last has been changed – p. 55; other committees have been added – Cooperation with the Professional Community, General Service Conference, Archives, International Convention/A.A. Regional Forums, Correctional Facilities, Treatment Facilities, International) –the titles clearly denoting the direction administrative responsibilities of the General Service Board. These committees are appointed yearly by the General Service Board chairman, and each committee, as we have seen, includes a suitable proportion of trustees, non-trustee experts in the work to be done, a Headquarters executive, and a staff worker.

In a fascinating glimpse at the operational “genius” Bill Wilson displayed, we will now read his insights regarding executives, lever of worker compensation, rotating assignments to gain stability, and full participation of paid workers. By applying these insights into my own work relationships with others, I can improve the quality and dedication of my work and perhaps, the work of others.

A detailed description of the active operational side of our General Service Board committees and active service corporations is too lengthy to set down here. But we should take note, however, of several more principles and problems which are common to A.A. World Services, Inc., and the A.A. Grapevine.

The status of executives – executive direction and policy formation distinguished: No active service can function well unless it has sustained and competent executive direction. This must always head up in *one person*, supported by such assistance, as he needs. A board or a committee can never actively manage anything, in the continuous executive sense. This function has to be delegated to a single person. That person has to have ample freedom and authority to do his job, and he should not be interfered with so long as his work is done well.

Real executive ability cannot be plucked from any bush; it is rare and hard to come by. A special combination of qualities is required. The executive must inspire by energy and example, thereby securing willing cooperation. If that cooperation is not forthcoming, he must know when real firmness is in order. He must act without favor or partiality. He must comprehend and execute large affairs, while not neglecting the smaller. He often must take the initiative in plan making.

The use of such executive abilities implies certain realizations on the part of the executive and those who work with him; otherwise, there is apt to be misunderstanding. Because of their natural drive and energy, executive will sometimes fail to distinguish between routine execution of established plans and policies, and the *making of new ones*. In this area, they may tend to make new plans and put them into operation without sufficiently consulting those whose work is to be affected, or those whose experience and wisdom are actually or officially needed.

A good executive is necessarily a good salesman. But he often wants the fast sell and quick results on those very occasions where patient consultation with many people is in order. However, this is far better than timid delay and constant requests to be told by somebody or other what to do. The executive who overdrive can be reasonably restrained by the structural situation and definitions within which he has to work. But a weak and wobbly executive is of little use at any time.

It is the duty of the good executive, therefore, *to learn discrimination* of when he should act on his own and when limited or wide consultation is proper, and when he should ask for specific definitions and directions. This discrimination is really up to him. His privilege of making these choices is structurally guaranteed by the "Right of Decision". He can always be censured *after* his acts, but seldom before.

Paid workers, how compensated: We believe that each paid executive, staff member, or consultant should be compensated in reasonable relation to the value of his or her similar services or abilities in the commercial world.

This policy is often misunderstood. Many A.A.'s no doubt regard A.A. World Services as a sort of necessary charity that has to be paid for. It is forgotten that our particular charity is just as beneficial to us as it is to the newcomer; that many of those services are designed for the general welfare and protection of us all. We are not like rich benefactors who would aid the sick and the poor. We are helping others in order to help ourselves.

Another mistaken idea is that our paid workers should labor cheaply, just as charity workers often do elsewhere. If adopted, this concept would mark our service workers for unusual financial sacrifices, sacrifices that we would ask no other A.A.'s to make. We A.A.'s would be saying to each worker, "We send Headquarters \$3.00 apiece every year. But it would be just great if you would work for A.A. at \$2,000 a year less than you would be worth elsewhere." Seen in this light, the low-pay theory appears as absurd as it really is, especially when we remember that A.A.'s World Service overhead is about the smallest per capita of any large society on earth. The difference between fair and poor pay at World Headquarters is a matter of only a few cents a year to each of us.

We should also consider the well-known fact that cheap help is apt to feel insecure and be inefficient. It is very costly in the long run. This is neither good spirituality nor good business. Assuming that service money is readily available, we should therefore compensate our workers well.

Rotation among paid staff workers: At A.A.'s World Office, most staff members' assignments are changed yearly (now very two years). When engaged, each staff member is expected to possess the general ability to do, or to learn how to do, any job in the place – except for office management, where, because of the special skills involved, rotation may sometimes be limited to part of the A.A. staff. But the basis of compensating all staff members is identical (as is the ceiling on salaries).

In the business world, such an arrangement would be unworkable. It would practically guarantee indifference and mediocrity, because the usual money and prestige incentives would be lacking. In our entire operating situation, this is the sole major departure from the structure of corporate business. Consequently, there should be proved and compelling reasons for such a corporate heresy, and there are.

Our primary reason for the adoption of rotation and equal staff pay was the security and continuity of the office. We once had the conventional system of one highly paid staff member with assistants at much lower pay. Hers had been the principal voice in hiring them. Quite unconsciously, I'm certain, she engaged people whom she felt would not be competitive with her. Meanwhile, she kept a tight rein on all the important business of the place. A prodigy of wonderful work was done. But suddenly she collapsed, and shortly afterwards, one of her assistants did the same. We were left with only one partly trained assistant who knew anything whatever about the total operation.

By thus putting our staff members on a complete parity, the removal of the usual money and prestige incentives did not really damage us at all. We A.A. have had what the commercial venture often lacks: a dedicated desire to serve which replaced the usual ego drives. At the same time, many of the temptations to destructive competition and office politicking were also removed. The spirit of the Headquarters improved immeasurably and found its way out into the Fellowship.

In the World Service Office, we have found it impractical and unfair to set any fixed term of employment. A staff member has to have several years of training. Are we then to throw her out, just as she is getting top grade? (See page 63.) And if she realized that she could serve for only a fixed period, could we have hired her in the first place? Probably not. These posts are hard to fill, because they require just the right ingredients of personality, ability, stability, and business and A.A. experience. If we insisted on a fixed term of service, we would often be forced to engage A.A.'s really not qualified. This would be both harmful and unfair.

Full "Participation" of paid workers is highly important: We have already discussed the necessity of giving key paid personnel a voting representation on our committees and corporate boards. We have seen that they should enjoy a status suitable to their responsibility, just as our volunteers do. But full participation for paid workers cannot be established by voting rights only. Other special factors usually affect the extent of their participation. Let's see what these are, and what can be done about them.

In our A.A. structure of service, we therefore must do more than give our paid workers a place at the A.A. council table. We ought to treat them in all respects as we would volunteers, people who are our friends and co-workers. So long as they work well, the fact that they are dependent upon the money they receive should never, consciously or unconsciously, be used as a lever against them. They must be made to feel that they are on the team. If, however, they cannot or will not do their jobs, that is something else again. We can and should let them go.

Such are the realizations which we can all use every day of our working lives. Add to these the further thought that no organization structure can fully guarantee our Headquarters against the depredations of clashing personalities, that only the sustained willingness to practice spiritual principles in all our affairs can accomplish this, and we shall never need to have any fear for our future harmony.

End of Reading

The question this concept raises is, “Do I have a dedicated desire to serve in sobriety to replace my old drive for ego satisfaction.” When I drank, I performed for your elusive praise. In sobriety the quality of my service is the measure of my dedication. I stop performing for praise and start contributing in order to be useful.

I can no longer cut corners and do the minimum as I did when I drank. Now, the measure of my sobriety is the measure of my contribution. I need to approach giving dedicated service to others with the same enthusiasm I was self-seeking when I drank.

I harness misdirected feelings of perfectionism (“all or nothing at all”) to improve the quality of my service. I try to spare no effort in cooperating with God as He develops my talents. I know that I have to suspend judgment over the quality of my contributions and leave that to others. Otherwise, I will not think I measure up. When there is conflict between quality and performance, I need to give more performance and less quality, otherwise I will contribute nothing.

The “Twelve and Twelve” describes what my attitude should be in approaching quality in my service when it says on p.69 “It is suggested that we ought to become entirely willing to aim toward perfection.”

One way I have discovered that I can increase the quality and dedication of my service is to pray before each job I undertake. When I am refreshed and renewed by prayer, I am able to give effortless quality and dedication to any assignment.

When the idea of taking a “geographic” or escaping occurs to me, I realize that what I need to do is stay where I am planted. I simply need to do a better job in all areas of my life. I need to give better service. I need to practice the eleventh concept of service rather than running from the challenge of giving quality and dedication to everything I do.

Approaching life trying to do my very best in everything I do adds a new dimension and excitement to living. I am capable of developing into God’s image if I approach the idea of serving others with the same care I had when I was self-seeking!

The quality and dedication of my service makes or breaks my contribution of my talents. As a servant, I am in direct contact with the world as God’s representative. I am part of the visible image of world service. I share leadership with all members of the earth.

When I give half-hearted service, I receive no satisfaction. But when I give dedicated, quality service, the satisfaction is enormous even if my effort falls short of expectations. In writing this book, I am trying to write the best book I am capable of at this point in my life. If I don't skimp, spare no spiritual effort, and pray for correct thoughts and words, I can be satisfied with my effort even though results are less than my expectations. I risk it anyway because I want to return the talents God gave me with all the quality and dedication I can muster. The job of a quality effort is the satisfaction I find in my work.

This attitude is reflected in the rest of my life.

I have found that the quality of my sobriety and my living has so changed as a result of practicing the principles of the steps, tradition, and concepts, that I automatically attempt to live a quality and dedicated life that is reflected in everything that I do. It is almost effortless and raises the routine to an art. The quality of my life has changed from enduring life as a drudgery that must be mastered to a challenge that exists to be celebrated in all its beauty. This is the reward of living the eleventh concept of service in all my affairs.

A second realization in living this concept in my life is the realization that I cannot give service alone. I need to cooperate with others to be of service and with those to whom I give service. I need to have a harmonious association with other servants to help and be a part of the quality and dedication of their service for me to give service at all. Above all I need to be anonymous for my contribution by not taking credit.

When I was drinking, I wanted to be separated from everybody; I did not want to be interconnected with anybody. I was never thinking about service when I was drinking, I was thinking about receiving service. Now my whole world of thinking has changed since I realize that it takes two of us to get me sober. This is why, when we go on a twelfth step call, we take somebody with us. We found that two of us could give better service than one of us.

My old idea about giving service with someone else used to be that this was fine as long as I was in charge. When I saw that I needed to have an attitude where I could take your direction and assist you in giving service, I say that I needed to become a servant to give dedicated service. A trusted servant means just that, a servant who is trusted. I entered a new area of dedication in my service when I adopted the attitude of a servant.

In the readings on this concept, Bill Wilson suggests some areas where I can improve the quality and dedication of my service in A.A.: I can prepare before electing leaders, I can be patient by avoiding snap judgments as a lazy way out, and I can recommend individuals with more ability than myself.

Bill points out in regard to finances, I need to be a realist and know that money and spirituality do have to mix, not spend more than I have, not saying "Never mind the money, let's get at it," living on my estimate of yearly income, staying solvent, revising the budget and cutting back when required, having available two thirds of my reserved funds but not hoarding money, finding a safe course between reckless budget slashing and imprudent spending.

In regard to relations with the world, he says that I need to tailor my business experience to living by avoiding manipulation techniques but using my technical experience and diplomacy, knowing what is dangerous and what is not, have the courage to take calculated risks, have a willingness to compromise, use publicity outlets, but avoid high pressure promotion tactics.

In regard to my artistic talents, I do not cheapen them by pandering to the lowest taste or produce products that look cheap for the sake of economy.

In general, I need to separate less important matters in order to examine the larger. Frequently, I like to do less important things because of the immediate satisfaction I get when I complete them. Successes in A.A. do things that failures don't like to do: toughest problems first! The quality of my work improves dramatically when I confront the day's most difficult problems before 10 a.m. My most pressing problem is to pray and meditate on the steps, traditions and concepts each morning so that I will stay sober.

Bill points out that in regard to the service of others, I need to respect their need to contribute quality service by respecting their independence. Those who have responsibility need authority, funds, personnel and equipment to carry it out. I should see that they have it just as God gives me what I need in order to render service in my talents. Even if it costs more money to respect others right to participate at work, I need to do it. I cannot save money but lose good will. Structural tinkering should not be done just for money saving purposes.

He points out that in regard to operational principles and problems in life in giving leadership service, I need to note that a committee does not manage, only advise. A committee did not compose Beethoven's Fifth Symphony. I want to be helpful to your creativity not dampen it.

Bill makes a series of suggestions that are particularly helpful at work. He says that as an individual, I need to take action and inspire by energy and example and thereby secure willing cooperation. If the cooperation doesn't come, I need to risk lack of approval from others by exercising real firmness without favor or partiality. I must take the initiative in plan making and not be afraid to comprehend and execute large affairs while not neglecting the smaller. I must distinguish between the routine execution of established plans and policies and the making of new ones. I must consult those whose work is to be affected.

I must be a good sales person, but not forsake patient consultation with many people in place of the fast sell and quick results. I do not want to overdrive myself or others.

I need to learn to discriminate when I should act on my own and when limited or wide consultation is proper, and when I should ask specific definitions and directions. I need to be censured when I make a mistake. I need to respect in others their "Right of Decision" (see Concept Three) in making these determinations.

Discipline and direction is a necessity. I must act on principle and not just friendship, and I need to expect this from those in charge of me, especially God. I rarely think that I should be

judged on principle rather than totally accepted on unproven faith. I need to be friendly and firm.

I need to see that others are paid the same way they would be in the commercial world. Cheap help is apt to feel insecure and be inefficient and is very costly in the long run. I can contribute to the quality and dedication of others by hiring more qualified people.

Pay increases should be based on time served only. To avoid hiring non-competitive people and for security and continuity in work and that more should know more of the total picture in their jobs. I need to reward faithfulness – ad dedicated desire to serve rather than rewarding the usual ego drives of position.

A fixed term of employment doesn't work because just as someone develops valuable experience, they would be let go. It is good to rotate assignments within reason.

I need to encourage full participation of paid workers with a voting representation on committees in matters that affect them.

I should treat all employees like volunteers, friends and co-workers. I should never use their salary as a lever against them. They should feel that they are part of the team.

If someone will not do their job, I need to let them go and not people please. Good working partnerships, noncompetitive ones, where we each complement each other is what I need to encourage and to be a part of to give quality and dedicated service.

If I treat my employees and family like volunteers, I will have a proper attitude toward them. It is the right perspective in giving myself service with others.

I cannot give quality service by myself. We need each other to do it. This is the big discovery of this concept. Then sustained willingness to practice spiritual principles in all my affairs will remove any fear of lack of future harmony in giving service together.

I understand the relationship of the eleventh step, tradition and concept this way: I improve my conscious contact by living a life of attraction and not promotion or manipulation. The eleventh concept of service prayer is: Father, may I take the time and effort to give you quality service. May I be unsparing of myself in my dedication to carrying the message without taking credit.

As we stop now to meditate for several minutes, I know that some of the thoughts going through my mind are: I want to thank God for the quality and dedication of my sobriety. He has given me a great deal of dedication in my sobriety, by giving me dedicated sponsors and friends. That is one of the great joys of my sobriety. True fellowship is a oneness in being with each other. There is nothing greater than like-minded people getting together to come closer to God through sobriety. The quality and dedication of living is then at its ultimate.

I want to ask God that I may express my thanks to him for my sobriety by giving quality and dedicated service to the alcoholic who still suffers. I want to meditate on those areas where I

Concept 11

can improve the spirit of my service in A.A., at home and at work in quality and in dedication in doing His will joyfully. Let us meditate.

(Pause for three minutes of meditation.)

Writing inventory helps surrender me to new awareness in my relationships with God and A.A., others, and work where I need renewed quality and dedication in my life. Let us write inventory in any glaring areas that need improvement.

HOMWORK: WRITING INVENTORY – PART ONE (My Quality and Dedication)

1. GOD and A.A.: Am I serving in A.A. to the best of my ability and dedication as a sponsor, speaker and leader? Am I pursuing the steps, traditions, and concepts of service with my best efforts?

Inventory Example – (Try to condense to three sentences.)

- a) The Story: At times I am tempted to coast on my program.
- b) What did I do wrong? I become a candidate for “creeping complacency”.
- c) What would God have me do instead next time? Pray for my dedication to be strengthened so that I do the maximum and not the minimum in the program.

2. HOME: How dedicated am I in my home life? Am I a dedicated husband, father and son? Do I take the trouble to spend the time I must to have quality in my home relationships?

Inventory Example – (Try to condense to three sentences.)

- a) The Story: I would only spend minimum time with my wife on things she likes to do that bore me.
- b) What did I do wrong? I was not dedicated in my relationship with her.
- c) What would God have me do instead next time? Pray for a spirit of total surrender in everything we do together for the common welfare of our relationship.

3. WORK: How dedicated am I at work? Do I pursue my work talents with quality or half-heartedly? Do I do the minimum at work, or do I always try to do more than is expected? Do I fulfill the complete vision I have of each job, or do I skimp?

Inventory Example – (Try to condense to three sentences.)

- a) The Story: When I permit myself to hurry, I lose quality and dedication in my work.
- b) What did I do wrong? I use lack of time as an excuse for lack of willingness to do the drudgery a quality and dedicated job demands.
- c) What would God have me do instead next time? I should pray for the willingness to hear the voice inside that tells me I can improve and pray for the power I need to do better.

HOMEWORK: WRITING INVENTORY – PART TWO (Helping You)

4. GOD and A.A.: Can I volunteer to help Central Office and others in A.A. give quality service to the alcoholic who still suffers? Do I pray before going on a twelve-step call so that I can carry a better message?

Inventory Example – (Try to condense to three sentences.)

- a) The Story: My approach to some jobs in A.A. is to get them done as quickly as possible if I don't like them.
 - b) What did I do wrong? I need to do a quality job whether I like the job I must do or not.
 - c) What would God have me do instead next time? Pray for a spirit of quality and dedication in all that I do, especially when I don't feel like it.
5. HOME: How dedicated am I at home in helping my family with their projects? Is there a difference in the quality and dedication of my help if it is my project rather than yours?

Inventory Example – (Try to condense to three sentences.)

- a) The Story: I should be more aware of the need to teach my son "quality" in doing tasks at home.
 - b) What did I do wrong? I don't take the time to be a good teacher on simple jobs.
 - c) What would God have me do instead next time? Pray to become a better example and teacher of quality and dedication in all the service I give.
6. WORK AND OTHER TALENTS (arts, sports, etc.): Do I make my time available to others at work in order to teach them how to do a better job? Do I encourage mediocrity around me, or do I reserve my praise for excellence? Am I painstaking in my attention to detail and teach by example?

Inventory Example – (Try to condense to three sentences.)

- a) The Story: I expect others to do excellent work but don't reward them with encouragement
- b) What did I do wrong? I become insensitive to the excellence of others.
- c) What would God have me do instead next time? Pray to be a catalyst for excellence in those around me by going out of my way to be grateful for the quality and dedication of others.