

GROUP INVENTORY: All Shapes and Sizes

All shapes and sizes of D.A. groups and meetings can benefit from a written inventory. Some groups occasionally or regularly take a “group inventory” using an entire meeting for an honest and fearless discussion of the group’s weaknesses and strengths. It is wise to plan and announce this some months in advance and to ask former members to come back for the inventory to share why they stopped coming. Usually a facilitator is obtained from another meeting. He or she will chair the group inventory, making sure that a positive tone is maintained at all times and that a fair discussion is held.

The format of the meeting can vary according to the size and wishes of the meeting. One large city meeting has developed a format, used annually, that provides three minutes for each member of the group wishing to speak. Members can share the things they like about the meeting and improvements they would like to see. This is a balanced inventory, similar to the Fourth Step inventory we take as individuals. It helps to see that the group has assets. Building upon our good features is a very strong way to develop our meeting.

The secretary of the meeting records in writing all the suggestions for improvement. During the next month, the secretary consolidates and compiles the suggestions and organizes them into a list.

The list is photocopied and then presented at a special, pre-announced business meeting. Members eliminate the unrealistic suggestions and select the most feasible and urgent. These are then ranked and the group decides upon a few goals to work on. Volunteers can develop an action plan and see that the changes are made. The inventory has paid off. It has provided a vehicle for expressing Tradition Two:

For our group purpose there is but one ultimate authority—a loving God as He may express Himself in our group conscience.

Another type of group inventory is based upon a list of questions that address the functioning of the group. This might be more appropriate for a small group. This method forestalls the fear or

embarrassment most members feel at bringing up sensitive topics.

For weeks in advance, members and visitors are given a list of inventory questions similar to the list in this leaflet. An experienced chairperson leads the group through each question, allowing anyone to speak on the topic. The group secretary records the comments, organizes them by topic, types them up and brings them to a business meeting for discussion and possible development of an action plan through group consensus. In this way, groups are made stronger and all members benefit from the power of truth.

At one group inventory meeting conducted with a list of questions, a one-time visitor from another part of the country was able to participate in the inventory by contributing his impressions of the meeting from a very valuable perspective, that of the first time attendee. When still-suffering debtors attend their first meeting, they will form a decision about whether or not to return based upon our behavior.

Intergroups and the General Service Board of Trustees also conduct group inventories, both on their individual attitudes and behavior and on the way the group functions in fulfilling their service duties. At every level of service, inventories are a good idea!

Points to Consider

- All groups, no matter what kind or size will benefit from doing a group inventory.
- A written record of suggestions for improvement forms the basis for an action plan.
- A functioning spending plan reflects the health and recovery of the group.
- Connecting with the Intergroup and World Service Conference requires planning and commitment.

You can develop your own questions for a group inventory or use these.

Meetings

1. Do we have a group spending plan?
2. Is the principle of anonymity maintained, avoiding gossip at all times?
3. How can our sponsorship be improved?

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4. Do all members take responsibility for the physical housekeeping for the group?
5. Do we use only conference-approved literature at our meetings, or have we allowed outside literature to creep in?
6. Do we focus on the positive benefits of the D.A. program, making sure to be an example of what the program can do to help us?
7. Do we have a clearly-defined way of sharing power or does all power reside in the hands of a favored few?
8. Do we have an up-to-date GSO contact who keeps the group informed or do mailings from the General Service Board get ignored?
9. Do we donate to the Intergroup, Area Group, and General Service Office?

Group Business Meetings

1. Do we use the tools of the program for the group welfare as well as our own?
2. Does each and every member have an opportunity to participate in group activities?
3. Are service people chosen with care and consideration, placing principles before personalities, for the welfare of the group as a whole?
4. Do we enlist newcomers in service positions just to make sure they keep coming to the meeting?
5. Are we unafraid to discuss money matters at the group business meetings?
6. Do we keep the General Service Office informed of any changes in our meeting time and place?
7. Do we let the General Service Office know when our group contact is no longer available?
8. Do we even have a group contact person? Do we know who he or she is?
9. Do we have a Group Service Representative and have we established a GSR travel fund in the group spending plan?
10. Is business conducted in an orderly manner at our business meetings?

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Intergroup Business Meetings

1. Are we reaching the debtors in our community?
2. Do we use the Business Owners Debtors Anonymous tools for the functioning of our group?
3. Is there more that the Intergroup can do to carry the message to the debtor who still suffers?
4. Do we sell only conference-approved literature at our annual day-long conferences?
5. Do we have excessive turn-over of Intergroup Service Representatives?
6. Have we attempted to find out why members are not interested in doing service?

This is D.A. Service Material, developed from the shared experience of D.A. members throughout the worldwide Fellowship. It also reflects the guidance of the Twelve Traditions, the General Service Board and the General Service Office. In keeping with our Tradition of Autonomy except in matters affecting other groups or D.A. as a whole, most decisions are made by the group conscience of the members involved. The purpose of Service Material is to assist in reaching an informed group conscience. Since Service Material reflects the current and ever-developing conscience of our Fellowship as a whole, it does not undergo the usual conference-approval process, but may be updated periodically under the auspices of the General Service Board to reflect current Fellowship experience.

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