

D.A. Strategic Planning

2019 Survey Report - Qualitative Research

Introduction

In 2018, the General Service Board (GSB) of Debtors Anonymous (D.A.) charged its Long Range Planning Committee (LRPC) with the development and presentation of a five-year strategic plan as a follow-up to the prior D.A. strategic plan covering 2009 through 2014.

LRPC had considerable discussion about the scope and content of a new five-year plan in comparison to the prior plan. The prior plan was deemed to be backward looking, focusing mainly on the state and development of the Fellowship in the years prior to the plan. Consequently, the LRPC decided that D.A. would best be served by a forward-looking plan which focused on goals that could be resourced, funded, and accomplished over a five year time horizon.

The LRPC borrowed heavily from the plethora of research on the successful development of five-year plans in the business world, with a particular emphasis on non-profit plan development. The extant document is the first in a two-step process for adoption of a five-year strategic plan for D.A.

The aim of this step (and document) is to provide the GSB with information to guide the selection of a limited number of high potential goals that can be resourced, funded and accomplished over an up to five year time horizon.

Once the GSB has determined the most appropriate goals for the five year plan, the second step in the process is for the LRPC to take this goal set and determine potential time horizons for their accomplishment, along with determining the required resources, both financial and human.

It is the hope of the LRPC that the resulting five-year strategic plan will be a “living” document in that it will be actively used to guide the direction and resources of the Fellowship over the next five years.

Methodology

This document presents the results of qualitative research with D.A. members who currently serve on the GSB, or as ACMS, or as WSC committee chairpersons regarding their thoughts and insights into appropriate five year goals for D.A.

Qualitative research was selected as the most appropriate methodology for this initial step for specific reasons. While quantitative research would potentially solicit the input of a much larger percentage of the D.A. membership, the LRPC did not believe that it had sufficient knowledge and insight into the scope and range of potential goals with which D.A. might engage in order to build and field a robust, inclusive survey questionnaire that would effectively solicit input for the D.A. community as a whole.

Consequently, the committee selected in-depth interviews with a relatively small number of D.A. members serving at the GSB or WSC levels as most appropriate to provide insight into the range, scope, breadth and depth of potential goals for D.A. over a five year time horizon.

The committee developed a questionnaire to be used for the research.

LRPC assembled a list of current GSB members, ACMs, and WSC chairpersons along with their contact information. The ACM for LRPC is a professional market researcher by trade. He conducted interviews with each of the members of LRPC to provide guidance on how to conduct interviews with the selected sample population. The sample was randomized and split among three of the committee members to conduct the interviews.

Participation was very robust: twenty-seven of the potential thirty interviewees agreed to and participated in a survey.

The surveys were recorded and the ACM for LRPC alone had access to the recordings. He took extensive notes and used these notes to develop this report.

The appendix to this report has the raw data (the notes) from the interviews.

The recordings themselves have been deleted in accordance with our agreements with each of the interviewees and with Tradition 12 of our Fellowship.

Detailed Findings

Goals and Opportunities

Respondents were very forthcoming about the opportunities upon which D.A. could capitalize and about the goals deemed most appropriate for and needed and wanted by the Fellowship.

Please note that the goals and opportunities discussed in the section are not listed in rank order of mention by respondents or in rank order of their popularity. Instead, they are grouped by frequency of mention, meaning that the goals and opportunities that were discussed by many participants appear toward the top of this listing and discussion that those that appeared less frequently are toward the bottom of this listing.

Public Information

The need to increase the awareness AND availability of D.A. is a dominant opportunity and goal mentioned by respondents. Over and over commentary such as those sampled below were expressed in the research:

“I think D.A. is the best kept secret in Recovery.”

“I feel like I belong to a secret society.”

“Make it known that there is an organization called D.A. and that it’s as strong as AA and everyone knows that AA works.”

“Many people are living so close to the edge, yet we don’t have droves coming to D.A. Somehow our message is not getting out.”

“[Building] D.A. meetings in every state in the U.S. at the [very] least.”

“Diversification. Getting into the poorer areas of the U.S.”

In the context of Public Information, the issue of reaching out to underserved populations is on the minds of many of those interviewed.

However, there is not clarity around the meaning of this term. For some, underserved populations are defined by geography here in the U.S. Several participants observed that face-to-face D.A. meetings tend to be geographically concentrated and that reaching out to underserved populations means penetrating these geographies with face-to-face meetings. In short, a structural build-out of the Fellowship within the U.S.

For others, underserved populations are defined by institutional constraints, such as the already defined Hospitals, Institutions and Prisons effort.

For still others, underserved populations are defined mainly by ethnic diversification.

For still others, underserved populations are defined mainly by broad age groups. Several specifically mentioned the swath of young Americans who have a burden of student loan debt.

Underlying Issues with Public Information

Underlying the significant interest in, and discussion of, Public Information among participants is what appears to be a fundamental issue: how to define (and act on) attraction versus promotion in a digital age.

There is a sense among participants, although not directly articulated, that D.A. is struggling with the boundaries of promotion in an age where media is digital in comparison to old school media represented by standard broadcast television and radio and print media such as newspapers and magazines.

In short, what defines attraction and what defines promotion in a world dominated by social media and the internet?

Participants bemoan that D.A. does not have a clear definition of either, nor does D.A. have an articulated policy governing how to use attraction (while not using promotion) in a digital age.

At the very least, some suggest that D.A. reach out to other prominent 12 Step Fellowships for their experience, strength and hope on this issue with a view to developing our own policy in this regard.

Several also note, accurately or not, that D.A. as a Fellowship tends to be populated by, to put it politely, persons of maturity.

How to reach out to young persons whose media world consists mainly or solely of digital resources is a deep concern among participants.

“To really hone in on how to reach out to the still suffering debtor who is generationally or ethnically different from me, that is, different from what constitutes the current membership of D.A.”

“Part of that [reaching out to the underserved] is saying who are they? Where are they? Once we have a sense of that, then building programs that will effectively reach out to them. Being willing to do whatever those programs take.”

“I’m going to imagine or suppose that other major 12 Step fellowships have either looked at or are looking at the intersection of anonymity and social media and attraction vs. promotion. In short, how do we use social media to let the still suffering debtor know that we are here and are a resource for you when you are ready to come use it.”

“New and creative ways to carry the message to the debtor who still suffers.”

“Being set up to reap the reward of our current technological state. It’s a different world from when our organization began some forty years ago. You don’t want to be doing promotion rather than attraction, yet if this is the way people interact with the world these days, the cellphone is the mechanism. How do you take advantage of that connectivity without losing or diluting the message? I’m not sure we’re structurally set up to take advantage of that.”

“I think it’s a genuine challenge. How to make the technical realities an advantage and not be afraid of them.”

“Looking around at other programs and how they are dealing with the digital society and economy. I think we need to be more attentive to that.”

“I wish we were able to more clearly define attraction vs. promotion. I think a lot of people don’t do any outreach because they don’t have a clear definition.”

Another issue underlying Public Information is a sense, again mostly unarticulated yet clearly present among participants, that D.A. has a much more difficult time reaching out to professionals who regularly encounter clients who would (from our perspective) benefit greatly from what D.A. has to offer. This may be attributable to the gap between the D.A. proscriptions on the use of debt versus the approach of the universe of professionals who advise people with money issues.

While D.A. is very clear that recovered debtors do not incur any new unsecured debt one day at a time, the exact mechanism for this dictum is not (yet at least) expressed as an algorithm. However, one “prohibition” appears to be definitive: that use of a credit card constitutes debting.

As some participants pointed out, this raises a serious point of contention with attempts to reach out to helping professionals. Helping professionals focus on moving people with debting issues from irresponsible to responsible use of debt. A total prohibition on unsecured debt is thought to be too stringent and therefore creates hesitation among helping professionals to refer clients to D.A. for help.

This was even expressed by a few participants as a potential issue with the name of the Fellowship: “Debtors Anonymous”. Perhaps, they speculate, that a name change that more accurately describes the

fundamental issue(s) “debtors” encounter might result in both higher levels of participation from the general population and higher levels of referrals from helping professionals.

Revamping and Upgrading the D.A. Website

Another aspect of Public Information that received frequent mention by participants was the need to revamp and significantly improve the D.A. website. While the most recent changes and upgrades are perceived as having been helpful, participants suggest that the website could be doing a significantly increased amount of the heavy lifting in Public Information. Perhaps even, as was suggested in this research, having a website specifically designed for newcomers and another for current members. Or even a way to make this distinction easily with the one current website.

“We need a website where you can actually find stuff.”

“We have a barely adequate website. We could have a portal for each language as we translate the literature.”

“I think D.A. could offer more services online such as literature sales. To make it easy and effortless.”

“We need an updated website.”

“The website’s a work in progress. It’s hard to navigate. Something is just not clear there. I think it’s the menu options. They’re particularly challenging.”

“Have a little more flash and polish when it comes to the online presence. More attractive; more fun. Ease of navigation.”

International Outreach

Closely linked to Public Information is the frequent mention by participants about helping to develop D.A. on a global basis. This is perceived as a major ongoing effort for D.A.

“Take the initiative to reach out to non-US countries. Get them more actively involved in what goes on here and get the US more interactive with what’s going on over there. We need to become one. There are things that the Fellowship is doing in Europe that we’re not doing in the US and they’re better off for it.”

“The international opportunity is huge. I think that’s mission critical.”

Much of the discussion among participants about international outreach is focused on the translation of D.A. literature into other languages and in making that literature available in an easy, fast and seamless manner for members outside the US. This demand also applies to D.A. literature available in English and within the U.S.

“Continuing to put literature online and make it easily available to buy. Online, in language, easily.”

“Basic pamphlets in twenty languages distributed worldwide for free. Such as on our website. Make D.A. available to people who don’t read English.”

“We need to find ways to expand outside the US, to get literature out beyond the US. Translation is huge.”

“I want all our literature to be digital. I think that’s already happening.”

“License D.A. literature to other countries so that they can get the literature without shipping.”

Seventh Tradition Contributions

Participants universally recognize that to fulfill any of these goals and opportunities will require the continued and increased support of the Fellowship, both with finances and with person power.

“A balanced spending plan with a broad reach. It’s going to take money to get to the underserved and under-reached.”

“If we had additional funds, we could provide a lot more services.”

“We need to find ways to suggest that people contribute that are stronger and we need to reach out to more people.”

“In the WSC committees and caucuses, they are coming up with innovative ways to ask for contributions. Make it known to the Fellowship that nothing is free. We cannot run on hope.”

“The ability to donate dollars directly to the GSO/GSB on the web. Let individuals know that they can contribute directly to the GSB.”

“Getting a new way to get online donations for non-profits. There are organizations out there that will work with us.”

“The whole issue of having more resources. I’ve seen that practicing the seventh tradition both with money and service have done the most to move my recovery. Many debtors avoid practicing the seventh tradition, it seems to me.”

The D.A. General Service Office

There is a general consensus that D.A. needs to explore moving the office to a more geographically central location where there is strong Fellowship support for the office in terms of volunteers to handle the growing responsibilities of the business of the Fellowship. This would include the current responsibilities of the office and also to take on more of the routine yet vital functions that are currently consuming the time and energy of both the office and the GSB.

“Moving the office out of a basement on the East Coast to a more central area with an InterGroup that is willing to support the office somewhat.”

“Our biggest expense is our office. I think we need to do a study of what is actually being done by our office manager and part-time person. Then possibly have other members do some of those functions.”

“We need to staff an office that can do some of the legwork that we do as a board right now.”

“If there was a dedicated person taking care of the website, not a Board member. A special worker.”

“The office has so much to do and it’s really hard to get it all done.”

“Moving the office. I would say if. It would be nice to have an office where there are volunteers and more of a pool of candidates to staff the office.”

“Have some of the office functions go virtual, such as print-on-demand.”

Support for Phone Meetings

A number of participants mentioned the need for support of phone meetings.

“Phone meetings? How can we be of more service to phone meetings? There are more phone meetings starting than in-person meetings. What can we put together that will be of service to phone meetings.”

“Phone meetings are an opportunity for growth and phone meetings need to be better served.”

“Phone meetings seem under-represented at the WSC. What are we doing to support them? To help them send GSRs?”

Conventions in Addition to the WSC

A few participants advocated having a national (or international) convention or regional conventions in addition to the WSC similar to those held by other 12 Step Fellowships focused on bringing the Fellowship to celebrate Recovery.

“We have the WSC, but we don’t have a convention. It seems that most other programs have conventions where people come together from all over the world to have Fellowship.”

GSB Issues

Several issues regarding the GSB received a few mentions. First among these is the need to fully staff the GSB. Second is to secure the revenue to allow the Board to meet twice a year face to face and possibly to revive the regional visits by GSB members. Also, the funding to allow GSB members to travel to visit

other Fellowships and to meet with organizations and attend conventions to inform helping professionals about D.A. as a resource.

Finally, a few respondents mentioned the need for increased and improved communications among GSB committees as well as WSC committees. There is some sense that duplicate or similar projects have been developed by various committees in part because there is a lack of awareness of what projects have been or are in process. This issue might be alleviated by the use of project management software.

“The first thing I would say is that we need a full Board. We need to be able to do the work of the Fellowship.”

“The trustees being able to travel.”

“We could get more paid people to do some of the work that the working board is doing. We’re not a strategic board. I’d like to see that shift. We need to staff an office that can do some of the legwork that we do as a board right now.”

“We need to go back to determine what we said we were going to do got done. Accountability.”

“Communications among the Board and the committees of the Board and the WSC and the InterGroups and the Office.”

“My sense is that try as we might there are significant communication gaps within the organization, up and down or across the structure. Sometimes the left hand doesn’t know what the right hand is doing. So a project may have been picked up by a committee and another committee spots the need for the same project and they go down the track because they don’t know that another committee is working it.”

“I don’t think it’s a matter of power or politics. I think it’s disorganization and lack of a use of technologies that would allow us to communicate better or more easily as an organization.”

Primary Purpose vs. a Large Tent

Another underlying issue that became apparent in this research is a serious disagreement about the scope and focus of the D.A. Program itself. Some are emphatic that D.A. needs to focus on the Steps and Traditions and, of primary importance, solvency. Others (and an apparently smaller group to be sure) believe that D.A. should be inclusive of anyone with self-declared money issues who might come to the Fellowship for a variety of reasons other than Recovery from unsecured debting.

“The most important one is a focus on primary purpose.”

“Reel back all the vision stuff; all the dreaming work. If you’re not solvent, you are hallucinating. Many people who come into the room are not interested in being solvent.”

“We need to return to the roots of the Steps. People want to talk about inclusivity and exclusivity and whether we need to have vegan options at the WSC. We are here as a Fellowship to recover from a progressive fatal condition called compulsive debting.”

“We do spending plans and action plans and PRGs and that’s three tools. And that shows the emphasis on us being a tools-based program rather than a Step-based program.”

“Reaching this population; solving these issues. It’s beyond debting. With savings accounts and spending plans and numbers. It teaches people life skills under the guise of 12 Step. It teaches people how to function in a financial world. It gives people financial intelligence.”

D.A.’s Strengths

The primary strength of D.A. as an organization that is articulated by participants is resident in the Fellowship itself and especially among members who are committed to giving out what they have received from the Fellowship. Participants also see strength in the operation of the GSB and in the WSC.

“When we work well together and discuss things fully and come together with a group conscience decision that is available for minority appeal, that’s when the D.A. organization is strong.”

I see D.A. as strong as an organization in the process by which we choose trustees. The use of consensus and trying to come to unanimity or substantial unanimity on all decisions. The use of the minority opinion. Those are some of the really strong aspects.

“I think there is a core group of people for whom D.A. has provided life-saving recovery that will do whatever it takes to share their ESH with other debtors who still suffer.”

“Clarity and group conscience process. Arriving at group conscience, at the greater good, through attention to detail. The medium is money, but the gift is clarity and the release of fear through faith in a Higher Power. Learning to use a wide network of resources to discover abundance.”

“I see the strength of the composite members. It’s our individual members doing service that is the strength of the Program. The people who show up at meetings, at PRGs, the amazing people on the Board, who volunteer and do this work. I want to be you when I grow up. It makes me want to do more and want to be a better person.”

D.A.’s Core Competency

After being asked to discuss D.A.’s strengths as an organization, participants were asked to identify what to them is D.A.’s core competency.

“Addressing the spiritual aspects of spending money you don’t have. All of these diseases are three-fold: body, mind and spirit but the solution is spiritual.”

“I think the process of the World Service Conference. Communication and literature. I think at the conference we follow the principles of the program. I trust the Board. I feel that people choose Board members who protect us and our core principles.”

“Organizational development and doing things in a certain structured way where everyone knows what the rule book is. The D.A.MS lays out how things are expected to be done.”

“Having a structured way of doing things.”

The collective wisdom as demonstrated in the literature.”

“The ability to care about what the fellowship thinks and the ability to take what the fellowship thinks and bring it to fruition.”

“There’s a strength in the clarity of our numbers and practicing the concepts and the traditions at that level and moving as slowly as needed at that level.”

“Providing support to the suffering debtor.”

However, it was during this part of the discussion with participants that the divide within the Fellowship between a substantial group of members who perceive that D.A. has been diverted from its primary purpose with what they would call extraneous issues and by not adhering strictly to an emphasis on the Steps and the Traditions and another group who believe that a core strength of D.A. is its inclusiveness in helping people with a wide range of money issues and accepting those who do not resonate with the debting issue yet have issues with money.

“I’m hesitant to say this because I think that’s a big part of our problem; we don’t know. We really don’t have one [a core competency].”

“We are a 12 Step Program at least by name and we don’t like to talk about the Steps. We like to pretend that we have these tools. We only give lip service to the Steps. I think that’s backwards. D.A. strong?”

“I think that it carries the message and sticks to the Traditions so that it is not diluted. Whether there are other issues and people who want to bring in other aspects, I think D.A. has been very clear about what it can do and what it should do.”

“To surround being of service to each other. We’re not a financial education group; we’re not a consumer credit counseling service; what we are is debtors who have experience with compulsive debting and it takes another compulsive person to understand the compulsion.”

“At our core we are good but we’re being interfered with by member identifications, outside issues, under earners, lack of knowledge about the traditions. I think we need to improve on all that stuff or else D.A. may go away.”

“Reaching this population; solving these issues. It’s beyond debting. With savings accounts and spending plans and numbers. It teaches people life skills under the guise of 12 Step. It teaches people how to function in a financial world. It gives people financial intelligence.”

D.A.’s Weaknesses As An Organization

After identifying the strengths and the core competency of D.A. as an organization, participants were then asked to expound on what they perceive to be the weaknesses of D.A. as an organization. Several areas of weakness emerged in this discussion.

One area is communications and specifically the lack of communication or access to information about which parts of the organization are working on what issues. This is perceived to result in duplication, overlap, and even minor turf battles.

My sense is that try as we might there are significant communication gaps within the organization, up and down or across the structure. Sometimes the left hand doesn't know what the right hand is doing. So a project may have been picked up by a committee and another committee spots the need for the same project and they go down the track because they don't know that another committee is working it.

I don't think it's a matter of power or politics. I think it's disorganization and lack of a use of technologies that would allow us to communicate better or more easily as an organization.

Another area is the length of time it can take for the Fellowship to act.

As an ACM, it seems that things take much too long a time to accomplish things. There are way too many gaps, too many levels of review and approval.

It sometimes feels like every decision no matter how big or small has got to be run by everyone and the janitor and everyone and the janitor has to agree before anything is done.

It's an issue of prioritizing issues and projects to understand which projects or decisions need to be very carefully considered, managed, poked or prodded across the fellowship before a decision is made and a separate list of decisions that are more experimental, we try them out, and it doesn't work or it fails, no harm, no foul. I think creating the two lists would help the organization get past the gridlock that sometimes takes hold inside the decision making process.

Things move too slowly sometimes. I recognize that at times taking appropriate time is important but more quick responsiveness would be appreciated.

Closely related to this issue is a sense on the part of some participants that people can become entrenched in a particular opinion and are very reluctant to listen to alternative points of view.

We also have the issue of people becoming embedded in their point of view and needing months of discussion just to be open to another point of view.

We have a personalities versus principles issue. It's not a big issue but it can become one if people are afraid to address the personalities.

It's important that when issues like this come up it's important that the Board deal with them right away so that they don't get put off for years and fester and grow.

We allow small problems to become large problems because we don't deal with them.

As with the discussion of D.A.'s core competency, the issue of adhering strictly to the D.A. primary purpose versus having a big tent arose in the discussion of weaknesses.

"We most need to improve our primary purpose in whatever form that takes. I say that because I spent last year working on a piece of literature about clutter and I felt that that a waste of my time...Enough people in the room voted to work on that project and I felt that my due diligence was to work on it and let the process happen. We developed this piece and then we brought it to the WSC and the incoming literature committee shot it down right away. It wasn't voted on by the conference. The WSC and the process there really protects us. I feel that the Board helps protect us. But I feel that the members in the Program are really willy-nilly with the primary purpose. I hear people describe themselves in meetings with all kinds of labels other than as debtors. No primary purpose. We have so many ways to describe ourselves. This program is Debtors Anonymous. I think our basic text will really help with this."

"There's too much focus on the tools and not enough on Steps, sponsorship and service. People seem to put the tools in the forefront. The tools without the Steps in nothing."

"I feel like D.A. needs a back to basics. You're a debtor. You recover with the Steps, Traditions, sponsorships and service."

"D.A. tries to be everything to everybody. We don't stick to our primary purpose. There are people in D.A. who are looking for different things such as investments, cash and prizes, employment advice."

"It goes back to primary purpose. Doing work like vision, dreaming, prosperity, abundance for me there are a lot of symptoms that become the focus of members. Solvency should be a primary focus of D.A. Not life coaching."

"I think we have to be careful about excluding people who really could benefit from D.A. Underearning and debting are two sides of the same coin. I think that too much focus on singleness of purpose that drove some people off. To have debt be the only focus but I think we excluded and somehow drove people off. And two smaller programs are not as strong as one larger one. We have to be careful about who we attract and who we want to have at our meetings. We need to be careful about who we exclude from D.A."

"The issue of what is solvency? I think it would be very helpful if we had a very simple definition of solvency. Not incurring any new unsecured debt. That's solvency. That's what's in the second edition of A Currency of Hope."

Another area of weakness is the perceived small size of the Fellowship and the profound challenges that participants see in reaching out to the still-suffering debtor.

"I do think the Conference and HOW meetings are small. I wonder if it would behoove us to have an Intergroup or district area rep to reach out to smaller meetings so that they can pool their resources to send a rep to the Conference. A rep from England did that. Groups pooled their funds and sent her to the WSC. When she got back from the conference, she went back and shared her experience there."

“To organize regions or districts so that we can get more information out to more people.”

“Reaching the debtors who still suffer. Lots of people in remote areas are still suffering. PI is a big opportunity.”

“The name of the organization puts people off. There are many ways to mess up your life with money beside debting.”

“We don’t have a lot of meetings comparatively. There’s a lack of awareness; for some reason the message is not getting out. Also, when people do come into D.A. I’m not sure there’s an ethic of getting them to the Steps quickly, getting people sponsors, getting them into the program.”

“People bring up that it’s so hard to get started. It’s hard to get a sponsor.”

“It’s not so much the organization. It’s more of branding issue. You say Alcoholics Anonymous, Gamblers Anonymous, Overeaters Anonymous and you know what it is. There’s just so much negativity to being a debtor.”

“We have a societal stigma against money issues. People think that they’re supposed to figure it out on their own. It makes it very difficult for people to walk into the room in the first place. I think it’s one of the reasons D.A. remains a small program.”

“Extremely small size of D.A. worldwide. There are large areas of the country that have no D.A. at all. I’ve heard the term D.A. desert used.”

“There’s not enough knowledge about regions. In other programs there are regions getting together and have a conference or convention. We don’t have that--people getting together face to face. The relationships are not as good as they could be. On the phone you don’t even know what people look like.”

“I’m not worried but I do get concerned about whether we are growing adequately. I don’t know if that’s systemic or whether it’s the nature of this disease. I know a lot of people who have this disease but don’t know what D.A. is. A lot of people know about AA; a lot of people know about OA. I feel that D.A. is not getting out there as a household word. It seems like we should be growing faster but I don’t know why we’re not. I don’t know if that’s something we are doing wrong.”

Still another challenge is attracting higher levels of seventh tradition contributions to fund the desire projects of the Fellowship.

“Getting the word out to individual members, especially phone and online meetings and individual members to contribute to D.A. and how to do it.”

“In the WSC committees and caucuses they are coming up with innovative ways to ask for contributions. Make it know to the Fellowship that nothing is free. We cannot run on hope.”

“Somehow we need to be able to raise more money for the national organization. We could do so much more and be so much more effective if we had adequate funding at the national level. This will involve growing the size of the organization overall.”

And yet another area of weakness is support for the international expansion of D.A.

“In two things. They both involve non-US countries. Three things. To get more involved in non-US countries. We are based in the US and the membership is worldwide. We tend on the Board to think stateside rather than internationally. We need to find ways to get the shipping costs down for the literature outside the US. And most of all D.A. needs to find ways for non-US members to send funds to the US using easy reliable and trustworthy systems. So our international members can order and pay for literature.”

“We should have a GSO for each continent. It would help reach out to more members who are on the fence about joining and who right now don’t know about D.A. We need to really reach out to people who don’t know where to turn for help with debt.”

“Very America centered. I’m Canadian. As yet D.A. hasn’t developed an international vision that works. I think it is coming but it’s very slow. Developing more of a world view. We don’t communicate across the country very often. In another fellowship I was involved with, we had trustees that would come to Canada and visit.”

Still another area of perceived weakness is the need for more service work among members of the Fellowship.

“It still comes down to how service equals recovery. I have to carry the message in order to keep it. As an organization we have to promote willingness to commit to our program.”

“We probably need more staff support and a more coherent message to the Fellowship on how to support that.”

“I want to see more service. More willingness to do service. More emphasis on the value of service and the miracle of service. The way that service really works to change my life, to take away my compulsion.”

Most Important Goal and Most Likely Ways to Grow

After discussing potential goals for D.A. over the next five years, participants were asked which goal they felt was most important and how D.A. was most likely to grow over the next five years.

While the goal of growing the Fellowship over the next five years received the most attention, many different goals floated to the top spot, depending on the individual participant answering the question. Consequently there is no consensus on the question of the most important goal. Nor was there significant agreement on the most likely ways to grow D.A. over the next five years.

Conclusions and Suggestions

The goals for the next five years suggested for D.A. by this research fall into three categories:

- 1) Essential unanimity
- 2) Broad unanimity
- 3) Some mention

The goals in the first category include:

- 1) Fellowship-wide focus on reaching out to the debtor that still suffers.
- 2) Fellowship-wide focus on strengthening current international outreach and on opening new international outreach.
- 3) Fellowship-wide focus on seventh traditions contributions of both funds and service.

The goals in the second category include:

- 1) A re-vamped, expanded, and impactful website.
- 2) Plan to move the D.A. GSO when current lease commitments expire.
- 3) Plan to improve communications among the GSB, the GSB committees and the WSC committees and caucuses.
- 4) Increase the GSB to a full complement of Trustees.

The goals in the third category include:

- 1) Develop increased support for phone meetings.
- 2) Plan for D.A. conventions separate from the WSC and similar to Fellowship conventions by AA.
- 3) Determine how to fund travel for the GSB, both for the Winter meeting, for regional forums and for D.A. business.

It is clear that each of these goals need to be fleshed out and honed to arrive at objectives that can be funded, staffed and measured in a meaningful way.

That said, the goals in the category of Near Unanimity require further detail.

The primary question is How? How to achieve these goals?

It is our recommendation that prior to committing to any of these goals, we explore the How.

Reaching out to the debtor who still suffers is an excellent example. While this is our primary purpose, the how of implementation can be daunting, as this research suggests. Consequently, a thorough review of the options is in order. Some, indeed, many were suggested in this research. So let's walk through the example of reaching out to the still-suffering debtor. Some of the sub-goals suggested by respondents are:

- 1) Establish at least one D.A. meeting in every state.
- 2) Increase outreach to minorities.
- 3) Increase outreach to Millennials, Gen Y and even younger persons.
- 4) Determine which methods of digital outreach are most effective and develop action plans to use them.
- 5) Measure the effectiveness of the methods tested and continue to refine the most powerful messaging.
- 6) Provide specific guidance to newcomers on how they can participate so that they get the help they need.
- 7) Develop a policy for D.A. that defines what is attraction and what is promotion in a digital age.
- 8) Consider the possibility of multiple websites or gateways to serve newcomers and current members.

Once there is consensus on the goals deemed most appropriate and most in accord with the Will of the Fellowship's Higher Power, LRPC is pleased to proceed with the development of specific objectives and plans to complete the five-year strategic plan.