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## The Eleventh Concept-Part 3

*While the Trustees hold final responsibility for AA'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 are related to each other, the special rights and duties of our executives, 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.*

*Continued from the October issue*

A DETAILED DESCRIPTION of the 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 AA World Services, Inc., and the AA Grapevine.

**1. 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 assistants as he needs. A board or a committee can never actively manage anything, in the continuous ex-

ecutive 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.

In our world services, we are solving two more important problems. One had been the lack of money to hire full-time top executives for AA World Services, Inc., and for AA Grapevine, Inc. However, in our General Service Office, we can now afford a general manager who devotes two-thirds of his time [now full time]. Recently, Grapevine finances have been much improved, and funds are now available to pay for talent whenever the Grapevine directors feel that it is needed.

The second executive difficulty is inherent in our AA situation. Our key people at Headquarters are AA members; they have to be. Therefore, the executives and their staffs are friends in AA, members of the same club. This sometimes makes it hard for an executive to give firm guidance and equally hard for his AA friends to accept it. Our AA executives find that they not only have to run a business; they must also keep their friends. In turn, those working under them have to realize seriously that we really *do* have a business to conduct, as well as a cooperative spiritual enterprise to foster. Therefore, a reasonable amount of discipline and direction is a necessity. Those who cannot or will not see this are not well suited for Headquarters work. Although excessive apartness or roughshod authority is to be rejected in an execu-

tive, nobody should complain if he is both friendly and firm. These problems are not insoluble; we do solve them right along, mostly by the application of AA principles.

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

This policy is often misunderstood. Many AAs no doubt regard AA 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 AAs to make. We AAs 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 AA 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

AA'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 only of 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.

**3. Rotation among paid staff workers:** At AA's World Office, most staff members' assignments are changed yearly [now every two years]. When engaged, each staff member is expected to possess the general ability to do, or learn how to do, any job in the place—excepting for office management, where, because of the special skills involved, rotation may sometimes be limited to part of the AA staff. But the basis of compensating all staff

members is identical. Pay increases are based on time served only.

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 who 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.

Thereafter, we installed the principle of rotation in a considerably larger staff. Since then, we have experienced sudden departures and collapses of AA staff members, each of which would have demoralized the place under the former conventional system. But since the remaining staff members always knew every assignment there was, no trouble at all was experienced. Under such a condition, replacements can be carefully chosen and trained at leisure. And the usual tendency to select less able associates is largely overcome.

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 AAs had what the commercial venture often lacks: a dedicated de-

sire 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.

One more aspect of rotation: the matter of time. We already know that the more responsible the assignment, the longer the term of service must be if we are to have effectiveness. For example, a group secretary can be changed every six months and an intergroup committeeman every year. But to be of any use whatever, a Delegate has to serve two years, and a Trustee must serve four.

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' training. Are we then to throw her out, just as she is getting top grade? And if she realized that she could only serve for 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 AA experience. If we insisted on a fixed term of service, we would often be forced to engage AAs really not qualified. This would be both harmful and unfair.

But we need not fear too many staff members' getting "old in the service." The emotional pace of "AA around the clock" is too strenuous for most of them to take for a very long period of time. Already, they come and go for this and for other personal motives. Within reason, most of them can and must rotate from assignment to assignment. But we should attempt no more rotation than this.

**4. 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.

The first is the fact of employment for money — the employer-employee relation. In human affairs, authority and money are deeply link-

ed. Possession or control of money spells control of people. Unwisely used, as it often is, this control can result in a very unhappy kind of division. This ranges the "haves" on one side of the fence and the "have nots" on the other. There can be no reconciliation or harmony until a part of that fence is taken down. Only then can proper authority join hands with a responsible willingness to get on with the job.

In our AA structure of service, we therefore must do more than give our paid workers a place at the AA 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.