

MOTIONS

From Idea to the Floor

What is a motion? (also called an amendment) It is a formal proposal put to a vote under parliamentary procedures.

It is important to understand that a *motion* is calling for a change to accomplish a specific purpose.

How it begins:

A motion can develop out of a perceived need or a desire for change. It can come from an individual member, a group of members, a Group and its GSR, a District and its DCM, an Area Officer, or any Area Standing Committee Chairperson (Maine Area 28 Service Workbook, #27, pg. 22).

It is fine to be passionate but it is important to keep an objective focus and to keep principles before personalities when formulating a motion. A motion that will make substantial change for the whole Area should not be based on trying to address a personal problem, incident, or exception. When emotion overrides objectivity, motions are unfocused and usually do not pass.

1. Ask what it is that you want to accomplish by your motion.
2. Keep it simple and of singleness of purpose – don't try to cram in all kinds of conditions or requirements.

Research:

Because AA uses the experiences of the past, it is almost a sure bet that something we think of has either been tried or at least thought of by others and not necessarily in one Area. There are a number of places that a person can do research to find facts, history, examples, or concerns that can help you craft your motion and develop background to help others follow your line of reasoning.

- *The Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions* is a fountain of ideas and trial and error that has gotten us where we are today and taught us how to handle situations that used to baffle us.

- *The Area 28 Service Workbook* and the *White Book* with past agenda items and assembly actions are also a wealth of information and the Area's history. Those on the Guidelines Committee are there to help do the research for you (see Workbook page 11 – Guidelines Committee) and have easy access to the *White Book*.

Just like motions for the General Service Conference, the agenda item (a preformed Motion) of what you want it to say or represent, goes first to the appropriate committee. In the case of the Area motions, this would be the guidelines committee. Remember a motion needs to be well thought out – there is no need to rush. In AA we take our time.

- *Advisory Actions of the General Service Conference of Alcoholics Anonymous* is also a place to get a broader prospective.
- Reaching out to other groups, districts, and even areas for suggestions or information on their practices is a good part of the process for developing a motion and, of course, our Past Delegates have experience and contacts that could prove useful so let them pass that on.
- There are many books of AA history which are fun to read but that also give insights to the way we think and will help us understand how things have come into practice and also the discussion and concerns around past changes.

This is an experience that may seem daunting but will enrich your life and your sobriety – developing a motion.

Writing a Motion:

3. Your wording should be crisp, clear, to the point and approximately one (1) sentence. A sentence is based on one thought or subject and that is what your motion should be.

If you have to add a lot of explanation to get your point across, it is a warning that you have not been clear.

4. Motions are black and white, not gray and should not be based on individual interpretation. Remember you are trying to make a change that

is for the Area as a whole and that will affect members now and those to come in the future.

5. Once you have honed down the subject of your motion and have put the motion in crisp language, you can put down the background material. This is **NOT** part of the motion but gives the reasoning behind making the motion.

*Again, this is not a place for **emotion or personalities**. Use facts, examples, and/or perceived problems that initiated the motion. Also remember what you think is a problem may not be viewed as a problem by others. Please, **DON'T TAKE QUESTIONS, REJECTION, OR DISAGREEMENT PERSONALLY**. Instead use it to help you reevaluate your proposal.*

6. A well written, focused motion that has been well thought out, tested (through the guidelines committee process) and put before others is always better than a hurried **reaction** to a situation. Always keep in mind that Love and Service are your motivation. If something is worth doing it is worth doing well.

If you try and your motion fails to pass, consider trying again after finding out why the motion failed. Is there still merit to your proposal? If so, go back to the drawing board and try again.

Presenting a Motion:

Once a motion has been formulated, written out clearly with background it is ready to be presented to the Maine Area Committee for inclusion on an upcoming Assembly Agenda. Instructions for doing this are in the *Area 28 Service Workbook* page 22, #27

B. 1 The presenter should be in attendance to represent and discuss the proposed Amendment (*motion*)

B. 2 Discussion and **majority vote** will allow the Amendment (*motion*) on the Assembly Agenda

B. 3 A negative vote will demand further review and a **second and final proposal** by the presenter at the **next Area Committee Meeting**.

C. It is only those motions that will change the Service Workbook that will require a $\frac{3}{4}$ vote of the Assembly Quorum and why we do a roll call, establish who has the right to vote and have counters at our Assemblies.

- *While going over the current Area Service Workbook, I realized there was no clear path to the Guidelines Committee. Question (idea) do we want to include a note somewhere in 27. A that all motions should be submitted to the Guidelines Committee for wording and research or perhaps make it a suggestion? This is the essence of developing MOTIONS – and it can be fun!*

Sharing Experience as a past delegate, panel 64,
Mary Lou T.