

Concept Seven

The Charter and Bylaws of the International Service Board are legal instruments, empowering the trustees to manage and conduct international service affairs. The Annual Meeting Charter is not a legal document; it relies upon tradition and the COSA purse for final effectiveness.

Our COSA leaders are trusted servants who do not govern the fellowship, but they do need to be empowered to lead, guide, and grow the organization. Concept Seven reminds us to avoid the creation of a single seat of power in our fellowship and our lives, opting instead for balance between different types and sources of power. We are also encouraged to remember the wisdom of trust, respect, and cooperation between groups.

COSA is registered as a nonprofit corporation under the laws of the Commonwealth of Kentucky, USA. Articles of Incorporation were submitted in place of a charter during the incorporation process in 1993; there is no charter on record. The *Bylaws of the International Service Organization of COSA, Inc.*, (ISO) were drafted into existence at the time of COSA's incorporation as a nonprofit organization. They are available on the COSA website for anyone who would like to gain a more thorough understanding of how the business of the fellowship is managed. The bylaws are a physical document which gives the ISO board legal authority over matters related to both the fellowship's business and its service matters.

The Annual Meeting of the board and delegates, known as the Annual Delegate Meeting, does not have a written charter on record. The delegates are empowered simply by the fact that they are elected by their groups to represent the collective voice of the fellowship and to convey the will of the fellowship to the ISO board at the annual meeting. The traditional representation of the COSA groups by their delegates at the annual meeting effectively grants the delegates sufficient power to balance the legal rights of the ISO board. In representing the many COSA groups, the delegates also represent the financial power of the donations put forth by those groups. In place of a charter, the annual meeting relies on a spirit of cooperation and a quest for unity that are reflected in the collective conscience of our whole fellowship.

Concept Seven helps to ensure that an effective balance of power exists between the board and the delegates. It lays the foundation for the two groups to work together without fear of being

overruled or disregarded by the other. The board's legal right to veto or overturn any suggestions or decisions made by the delegates reminds the delegates to make thoughtful, reasonable requests and to act only in the best interests of the groups they serve. The traditional influence of the delegates, along with their power to direct the fellowship's donations toward or away from certain projects, encourages the board to support the delegates whenever they reasonably can. Both the board and the delegates do their best work for the fellowship when they respect each other's power and trust each other to use that power for the benefit of those they serve.

Our personal and professional lives may benefit from our understanding of Concept Seven as well. We all have limitations in our abilities and in our authority in any given situation, and we will likely find ourselves working with other people from time to time. If we approach those situations with respect for our own objectives as well as for the objectives of the other people, we may more easily see how we can help each other. This may lead us to trust others to work on our behalf and encourage us to work on their behalf. Once we have trust and respect, a sense of shared commitment to each other's growth and accomplishment can develop. In such situations, we are aware that both parties have the power to build up or tear down the bonds that join them. Leveraging the balance of power between groups and people almost always results in strong walls that surround them and bind them together instead of walls that divide them.

It is inevitable that we will encounter many sources of power and authority in the world. When we strive to build trust and respect between those sources of power, we cultivate balance as well. The balance exemplified by Concept Seven creates a collaborative environment in which each side can safely exercise its influence without the need to assert its ultimate authority over the other.