

Concept Ten

Every service responsibility should be matched by an equal service authority, with the scope of such authority well defined.

Concept Ten endows the Twelve Concepts with a crucial principle: accountability through appropriate authority. None of the other Concepts could be honored with much integrity without the sage wisdom of Concept Ten. When a service role is delegated, the tools and permissions required to fulfill that role must also be delegated with clear guidance and boundaries. Accountability can best be expected when authority and responsibility are balanced.

Our COSA fellowship comprises many individuals, and the contributions of every member are important. Concept Ten helps to ensure that each member who accepts a service role is also awarded the authority they need to carry out their task to the best of their abilities. In addition, clear expectations and limits around this authority must be understood by everyone involved. Boundaries other than those established by a job description, the COSA bylaws, or the Twelve Traditions and Concepts may need to be clarified at the outset of a service assignment. At the ISO board and committee level, using the Service Guide is a helpful tool for consistency within roles. Individual committees have the autonomy to develop their own written guidelines should they choose to do so. This often eases many of the frustrations of micromanagement and frees our trusted servants to use their own unique gifts and talents in service to the fellowship.

For example, when a group treasurer is asked to pay rent due for the meeting space, they need access to the group's funds and permission to deduct the rent from the balance. The treasurer must also understand that only the authorized amount should be withdrawn. Similarly, when a delegate represents their group at the Annual Delegate Meeting, they must understand the group's conscience on the matters being decided and commit to voting accordingly. Some groups entrust their delegate with the right of decision to change their vote should new information become available. Responsibility supported by a well-matched and well-understood authority helps to ensure the best results for our COSA volunteers and the fellowship as a whole.

The principle of delegating appropriate authority to match a responsibility applies equally when the recipient is a board committee, subcommittee, or other group. When the Literature Committee was tasked with writing the book you are reading, they assumed a great deal of authority and autonomy. At the same time, they were given guidelines by the delegates about the content of the book, as well as instructions to focus only on the basic text until it was complete. The application of Concept Ten gave the committee both the creative freedom and the guardrails needed to fulfill this commitment to the fellowship.

When Concept Ten is practiced throughout our service structure, the International Service Organization (ISO) board and its members can focus on matters of overall policy and international service. They are not distracted by a need to manage every project or committee

directly because the people who are managing the day-to-day business of the fellowship are well-equipped to carry out their duties. Delegation of well-defined authority in order to complete a task requires trust between COSA members, between the board and its committees, and between committee chairs and committee members. Our willingness to give and receive this trust is a sign of our growth and recovery. When confusion or misunderstanding occurs, it is an opportunity for us to communicate openly to decide what is best for the fellowship as a whole.

In our daily lives, Concept Ten is important as we strive to achieve accountability in our own actions and hope to expect it of others. For instance, when a teenager is hired to mow a yard, they need to have permission to handle the gas can and understand the precautions necessary for doing so safely. An employee who is responsible for the distribution of paychecks is trusted to handle a great deal of confidential data. They are also expected to closely safeguard each employee's personal information. When people plan an event together and one is tasked with reserving the venue, consensus **is more likely** if **guidelines** are agreed upon before the commitment is made. This way, the person in charge of the venue has freedom to make the choice they believe is best with confidence and respect for everyone in the group. We are most able to do our best work when we have authority that is right-sized to our task.

Responsibility without authority can lead to feelings of discouragement and frustration. Authority without clear boundaries can lead to mismanaged resources and chaos. When responsibility and authority are kept in balance, each of our trusted COSA servants is prepared to remain accountable to themselves, to their own Higher Power, and to the COSA fellowship.