Outreach Working Group Recommendations

Allocation of Funds and Time/Space at the Congress

Summary

The Outreach Working Group would like to offer three final products by the Shambhala Congress, as follows:

OUTREACH TOOLKIT p. 2

Manual and CD with advertising templates and recommended follow-up procedures for gateway programs, specifically *Turning the Mind into an Ally*.

OUTREACH BULLETIN p. 3

Newspaper-style handout of "best practices" related to innovative programs and community events that are already taking place around the mandala.

WEBSITE FACELIFT p. 4

New design for the homepage of the Shambhala International website so it is more inviting, dynamic, and user-friendly for newcomers.

The following were allocated by the Mandala Governing Council at its December 2004 meeting in Boston:

(1) $1,500 in order to produce the *Outreach Toolkit* and *Outreach Bulletin* for distribution at the Shambhala Congress

(2) time during the Congress to present the *Outreach Toolkit*

(3) space in the foyer for an Outreach "booth" to distribute materials as well as conduct consultations, for example, web makeovers for center websites

(4) $3,000-5,000 to redesign the homepage of the Shambhala International website in order to gear its language and content for newcomers (this piece of our work could happen after the Congress if there are no funds now)

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OUTREACH TOOLKIT

Background

In line with Sakyong Mipham Rinpoche's vision of "turning the flower outward," the Outreach Working Group has spent the year strategizing about how to reach a wider audience for gateway programs and how to keep newcomers after their first visit to a local center. We decided on a pragmatic focus: to offer a set of templates for local centers that they could adapt to do advertising and follow-up for gateway programs. Our *Outreach Toolkit* is designed around *Turning the Mind into an Ally* (TMA), but its application is broader. The templates we are offering can be geared toward multiple programs, and it is our hope that they will also serve as a model for a new approach.

Our idea is that programs could be considered a process rather than an event. Who is our target audience and how do we reach them? What is the next step after a gateway program and how do we steer new students in the right direction? To tackle these questions, the *Outreach Toolkit* addresses the "before, during and after" of a gateway program. It is planned as a 50-60 page manual, to be presented in a simple three-ring binder with an accompanying CD. The binder will include the official curriculum of TMA as developed by Acharyas Emily Bower and Adam Lobel, who have worked closely with the Outreach Working Group in developing our materials.

In the toolkit, sandwiched on either side of the official curriculum, are sections on advertising "before" the program and follow-up procedures "after" it. The advertising materials include templates for poster, fliers, postcards, 1/4 and 1/8 inch newspaper adds, and more. Each template is being designed by Alden Karr so that it can be tailored to meet the individual needs of local centers. There is space allotted to add information concerning the logistics of the program, contact information of the center, and other relevant on-going or upcoming programs (Open House, TMA Follow Up, etc.). The first draft of the poster template will be ready for review by the Mandala Governing Council at the December meeting.

Recommendations

The total cost for the design and production of the *Outreach Toolkit* is $1,500.

Fee for designer	$ 500	(already granted)
Production costs	$1,000	(to be recouped through sales of toolkit)
Total	$1,500	

Production costs involve the three-ring binders, xeroxing fees, CDs and the cost to burn them. A detailed budget for materials involved in production cost will be available for the December meeting of the Mandala Governing Council.

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OUTREACH BULLETIN

Background

The Outreach Working Group is in the process of gathering stories about innovative programs and community events from around the mandala. These can be seen as "alternative gateways" and perhaps even as "bridge programs" after a new student's initial introduction to meditation and before getting more involved at the center. The view here is that Shambhala Centers are not only program centers but also a locus for building community and enlightened society. Inviting newcomers into the community can foster a sense of involvement and inclusion to keep them coming back after a gateway program.

The *Outreach Bulletin* carries forward an important piece of inspiration from the previous Shambhala Congress, in which there was a strong sense that we should tap the wealth that already exists in our mandala. To do this, the *Outreach Bulletin* is planned as a 24 page newspaper-style handout (similar to *The Dot*) of "best practices" related to outreach. The idea is to encourage grassroots initiatives and foster lateral communication between centers, by highlighting innovative programs and community events already happening at the local level. The bulletin will consist of short articles of 500-1000 words, each with an accompanying photograph. We are hoping to have full participation from centers, so that representatives at the Congress will have an investment in reading it and bringing copies home.

The *Outreach Bulletin* will be given free of charge to Congress participants, and center directors will be encouraged to take copies to display at their local centers. In order to offer the *Outreach Bulletin* for free, the production costs (but not the design costs) will be baked into price of the *Outreach Toolkit*. If possible, we would like International to cover design costs as a service, since design is a one-time-only economy of scale. Then, the production costs could be covered by each local center when they purchase the toolkit, thereby paying only the cost to produce their own iteration of the design.

Recommendations

The total cost for the design and production of the *Outreach Bulletin* is $2,000.

Fee for layout	$1,000 (funds now being requested)
Production costs	$1,000 (to be recouped through sales of toolkit)
Total	$2,000

Aaron Bihari, who does the design and production for *The Dot*, has offered his skills at a discounted rate. He estimates the layout will require 50 hours at $20 per hour. We are currently in the process of obtaining quotes from various publishers, and those quotes will be available for the December meeting of the Mandala Governing Council.

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WEBSITE FACELIFT

Background

Shambhala International is in a unique position to develop marketing strategies that have tremendous synergy and economies of scale for the entire mandala. The execution of such strategies would be very much in line with the new idea of Shambhala International as a provider of "services" for city and land centers. A much needed project with tremendous potential for return on investment is this: to redesign the homepage of our international website, www.shambhala.org, so it is more inviting, dynamic, and user-friendly for newcomers.

The need for this project has been recognized in the past, but not fully implemented due to a shortage of funds and personnel. As Shambhala Center directors attest, the web is one of the main ways that newcomers first hear about us. With the tremendous amount of traffic coming to www.shambhala.org, our website has the potential to serve as an important portal for newcomers entering the mandala worldwide. However, the current site is not easy for a first-time visitor to navigate. What we need is a more dynamic homepage that is content driven, providing news and information to magnetize newcomers. The Outreach Working Group would like to recommend a new design with the following features:

* banner "Learn to Meditate" with short descriptions of our gateway programs
* clickable map to find a list of centers closest to you
* news headlines with a link to stories (from *The Dot* and elsewhere)
* rotating photo of land center or other entity in mandala (changes every 30 seconds)
* simple language that is understandable to newcomers (no "insider" jargon)

Other features could make the homepage more dynamic for first-time visitors and returning users. For example, there could be a few links chosen at random by the computer when the page loads, such as “dharma of the moment” or “peer into the mandala.” The “dharma of the moment” link would lead to a randomly chosen teaching from Vidyadhara, Sakyong, Pema, or other major teacher associated with our lineage. The “peer into the mandala” link would be underneath the rotating photo (mentioned above) and open a new window with the website of the entity depicted, such as any of the land centers, publication houses, dharma shops, acharya sites, etc.

Recommendations

The total cost for the design and production of the Website Makeover will run between $3,00 and 5,000. A line by line time estimate and hourly rate will be provided at the December meeting of the Mandala Governing Council.