

WEB STEWARD

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“Web Steward” is a term that Ellis Boal proposed at the February 24, 2019 SMM in Grand Rapids, as an alternative to the familiar but outdated term for a person who designs and maintains a website. The main objection at that time was the connotations with the stem in the compound word, which is “master”. “Steward” was gender neutral and seemed to imply service rather than power and control.

The points are well taken, but there are more concrete issues with the concept of “a person who designs and maintains” our GP-MI web application, regardless of the post’s title. The job is too big and too important for one person alone. The GP-MI is a growing enterprise. It’s large and complex now, but things should get even more involved in the future.

Content, resource, and data management must be handled by the various offices and members themselves. This is already being done. For example, people can become GP-MI members without having to wait for an officer to respond to an email. This greatly increases efficiency because work that was done in isolation and then copied or lost can now be persisted to our shared server without redundancy.

But when party officials are absent for any reason, we need someone on hand who is ready and able to step in as required. But here again, the Web Steward should refrain from entering and manipulating data that another officer was expected to enter. Instead, the Web Steward should assign the necessary user role to another officer and then show them how to enter the data.

A survey of the tasks this person might be called on to perform makes it clear that several people will be required to share this responsibility. The management tasks target the following areas:

- File resources from officers who are absent.
- Application Users and Roles definitions and assignments.
- Office/Delegate data and Officer/Delegate assignments.
- Committee data including committee definitions and member assignments.
- GP-MI member data
- Locals data.
- Treasurer’s data, including donations and contributions.
- Communications data including political candidates and GP-MI site contact Information.
- Chairperson data, including Nominations
- Meeting notifications details and marketing email
- Articles written to the site.
- Forums created and used.
- SCC discussion and decision area.
- Official email accounts and their use
- Domain name registration
- Databases including credentialing and backup

- FTP permissions and backup
- Hosting accounts
- Application improvements planning
- Communicate/collaborate with all officers, site users, and with software developer.

In other words, those in the Web Steward role are authorized to do anything within the application and its data and file resources, our email, and our hosting account. For this reason, the most important prerequisite for this post is trust.

Communication, coordination, and collaboration are essential, but if trust is lost, the position must be lost as well - immediately.

Trust is not lost by making a mistake. Trust is lost by being deceptive. Trust is lost by being indifferent to members who have questions or concerns. Trust is lost by failing to observe the critical nature of this position. Trust is lost when this position is used to prank or devalue others.

It is very difficult to remove a person from this position without damage to the organization. Therefore, we must be as confident as we can be in the candidates for Web Steward before 'handing them the keys'.

The Web Steward should take the time to practice with and test all the website functions. This includes but is not limited to creating, publishing/unpublishing articles, entering contribution and donations, uploading/downloading files to all areas, sending marketing email to the current member list, backing up and downloading the application and its database, and accessing our hosting account, (currently at GoDaddy).

Detailed instructions for managing each of the areas listed above are available online to the Web Steward and will be linked to this article soon.