



**World Council of Jewish Communal Service**  
המועצה העולמית של שירות קהילתי יהודי

**Communities in Transition**  
**Challenges & Opportunities for**  
**the Communal Professional**

קהילות בהשתנות  
אתגרים והזדמנויות לאיש המקצוע

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**Discussion Group Summaries**

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20 November 2008  
כב חשון תשס"ט

Maiersdorf Faculty Club  
The Hebrew University of Jerusalem  
Mt. Scopus, Jerusalem

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**Stepping Across the Generational Divide**

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## Exploring Local Generational Divide Issues

Thursday, November 20, 2008

11 am - 12.30 pm

Chair: Dr. Dvora Blum

Regional discussion group facilitators:

North America - Cara Unowsky, Jewish Home Lifecare

Israel - Alon Galron, JAFI

Europe/Rest of the world - Doug Krikler, UJIA

**Discussion took place separately in three regional groups and continued in a similar format during the 3rd session.**

**North American group focused on the generation gap and continuity of leadership; Israelis discussed limited career options for aspiring non-profit managers and resulting dearth of young people interested in the field; and the European group brainstormed on how to make community involvement relevant to young adults, on changing donor patterns, and, specific to Germany, immigrant absorption.**

### North America

The baby-boomer generation, with its significant lay and non-profit management experience, is about to retire. **How should the community involve the young generation in lay leadership and professional roles?**

- **Just as baby-boomers reached senior positions and accumulated valuable expertise, they are being asked to move on and make room for the new generation.**

- **The apprenticeship/mentoring model is no longer en vogue and institutional memory of Jewish organizations is short.**

- **Work style differences between generations: how to ensure retention of professionals when young people only want to stay in a job for 2-3 years?**

- **Community members born after 1975 want to take care of themselves, not of community affairs.** This group is preoccupied with financial security, and the community should offer them services relevant to their specific needs (i.e. financial planning or legal advice services).

### Israel

**Israeli non-profit community is unable to attract young people to its ranks.** On one hand, young professionals, influenced by the Israeli society's growing individualism, are lured into more lucrative professions. On the other hand, the non-profit community, reflecting the inflexibility of the local labor market, is unwelcoming to recent graduates with generalist backgrounds. In addition, **the non-profit sector does not offer a clear career path for those starting at the entry level.**

### **Suggested remedies:**

- **Expose teenagers and young adults to experiences that will attract them to NGO volunteering** and perhaps professional involvement in the non-profit sector.
- **The non-profit community should learn how to accept people at different levels of participation**, on the scale between volunteering to full-time professional involvement. The establishment has to be open and inclusive enough to new participants and new modes of operation.
- **Non-profit organizations have to learn how to work together** to pull resources and offer professional opportunities to young people interested in NGO careers.

### **Europe/Rest of the world**

Today people are free to choose among more causes and communities than ever before. **While European Jewry is not struggling with a generation gap, it is competing with cultural complacency.** There is a need to create a space for the coming generations to express themselves Jewishly in a way that is meaningful to them.

- Young professionals especially need to use their limited time effectively. The community needs to give them choices for getting involved. **The Union of Jewish Students in the UK (UJS) is an example of a meaningful Jewish experience. Another example is Limmud: supported by establishment but allowed to grow.**
- Leadership may not be the same as managers or donors. **Leadership should be defined in terms other than purely philanthropic. Motivations for donors have changed. It used to be the “obligation to give”, now it is “commitment to the cause”. Givers and receivers have traded places.**

### **Additional points**

Germany:

The country has seen an explosion in Jewish population from 35,000 to 120,000. **The cultural divide between German Jews and Russian-speaking Jewish immigrants can be bridged by activities that will encourage young people feel part of the community** through summer camps, Israel trips, kindergartens etc.

Immigrants typically go through three stages:

- 1) Integration - hiding Jewishness
- 2) Rediscovery of Jewishness
- 3) Choice: What way to go? At this point community should be able to absorb newcomers; otherwise they will be lost forever.

## **From the Field: Dealing with the Next Generation** **13.30 - 15.00 pm**

**Chair: Dr. Armand Lauffer**

**Presenters: Asher Ostrin, JDC FSU**

**Justin Korda, ROI Community & Taglit**

**Yizhar Hess, Masorti Movement in Israel**

**Nicky Goldman, UJIA**

**Four presentations were followed by a Q&A session.**

**Asher Ostrin made a case for differences between the old and new generations' leadership and involvement patterns in the FSU. Justin Korda and Yizhar Hess described their organizations' efforts. Nicky Goldman stressed the importance of leadership development and presented examples of the British community successfully involving its young adults in community leadership roles.**

**Asher Ostrin, JDC FSU**

**In the FSU there is clear delineation between two groups, not necessarily defined by age.**

There are those who were educated in the Soviet Union and those who were educated during and post-perestroika years. More accurately, the line is drawn between those born before 1975 and after 1975. The generation gap is expressed vividly in Jewish community life in the Former Soviet Union.

- 1) The younger generation is entrepreneurial and meritocracy-oriented
- 2) Evaluation, setting goals, accountability are familiar terms to the new generation, and are completely unknown to the old one.
- 3) Governance issues: In the old model, it was one person who founded the organization, kept leading it and offered no continuity.
- 4) Planning. In Soviet times, there was no planning. Your goal was to provide immediate services and do as you were told.
- 5) The post-Soviet generation thrives on change, because they grew up on it. If things stay the same, they get nervous.
- 6) **Perhaps the most crucial difference: the old generation comes from a culture where one was in awe of all things Jewish.** Anything Jewish was valued and valuable. In post-perestroika years, one had to have a Jewish concert for a holiday; the quality and content were irrelevant. The new generation takes Jewish identity and existence of Jewish programming for granted. For them, that Jewish concert competes with other events and entertainment available, so quality has to be superior.

**Justin Korda, ROI Community and Taglit**

The story starts with Birthright Israel and the need to create follow-up to Birthright's success.

**ROI is driven by innovation, defined as young people creating something that didn't exist before that will eventually build a community around them. Examples: Marcus Freed's biblioyoga, Jewish-themed Facebook applications, "Greening synagogues", "godcasts".** The initiative is international, and it is not a program for Jewish professionals.

ROI is looking to provide seed money and encourage participants to fundraise. Also looking to organize local meetings.

### **Nicky Goldman, UJIA**

Gordon Brown said about UJIA, "you invest in leadership."

Over the last few years, UJIA has brought in 50 new people in addition to 350 people already on different committees. Yet **how does the UJIA make itself relevant to the next generation?**

**The organization encourages fresh university graduates to work for UJS and is bringing professionals in media, law, and finance to mentor the graduates.** That helps young leaders network into professional positions and shows them the example of lay involvement.

### **Yizhar Hess, Masorti Movement in Israel**

Tenth generation Jerusalemite, studied Hebrew Literature and law, went on to become a Jewish Agency emissary to Tucson, AZ.

Yizhar related that his first meaningful Shabbat experience was in Tucson, when Yizhar saw a bat-mitzvah girl reading from the Torah while holding hands with her grandmother who was given an *aliyah*. It reminded him of his own bar-mitzvah, when he fulfilled his grandmother's dream and read the whole weekly *parsha* in an Orthodox synagogue, while his grandmother was tucked away in the womens' section so far away from the *bimah* that she couldn't hear him.

Today the Masorti movement in Israel includes 52 communities, *minyanim* and *havurot* all over the country.

### **Discussion**

Q: What does belonging mean to people that the panelists are working with?

A: One hears people talking about belonging to something bigger than just themselves. Beyond that, **belonging is difficult to define.**

Q: How does ROI manage to build communities around initiatives they support?

A: Look at how many people are involved around your project - not as consumers, but at the planning and implementation stages. Empower them and give them real responsibility, also **empower professionals**

Q: **How can one energize Israeli NGOs and open them up to new ideas?**

A: There is a **strong sense of cynicism of Israel, but also a lot of social action**. Idealists often feel lonely as if they are the last people in the world who are doing good. One of the challenges is to put them in touch and alleviate that feeling of loneliness. **“Teach for America” is the largest recruiter of college graduates in the US. It gives young people a taste of community involvement early on. Perhaps a similar program can be created in Israel.**

Q: How does the older generation relate to ROI initiatives?

A: **Older generation doesn't necessarily want to let go.**

## **Bringing It All Together**

### **15.15 - 16.30**

**Chair: Dr. Dvora Blum**

**Regional discussion group facilitators:**

**North America - Cara Unowsky, Jewish Home Lifecare**

**Israel - Alon Galron, JAFI**

**Europe/Rest of the world - Doug Krikler, UJIA**

**This session was a continuation of Session 1. The Israel and North America groups merged for the duration.**

**Israel/North America group discussed gender patterns in community leadership and the Israeli labor market in relation to young adults starting out in non-profit careers. The European group reiterated the need to create involvement opportunities that would speak to community members.**

### **Israel/US group**

- **American Jewish community has traditionally focused on attracting young men and creating elitist frameworks for them in order to network and nurture future donors.** There is a lot of pressure on people to move from these frameworks into business schools.

- **As women began entering communal leadership position, men started leaving, looking for higher social status and lucrative compensation.**

- Significant difference between the US and Israel: **Israeli labor market is not yet developed enough to accommodate people with generalist backgrounds.** The Israeli system places people who studied management into management professions, nurses into nursing, and computer graduates into IT departments. A social work or a non-profit management course graduate is a Pandora's box for the employer. **The labor market is inflexible and opportunities for career growth in non-profits in Israel are rare and few.**

- At the same time, volunteering can be a transformational experience. One should work to create opportunities. An example is a *chevra kadisha* in South Africa that reinvented itself to provide social services to the community.

### Europe/Rest of the world

**Fundraising cannot be the end goal. The end goal is the transformation that can be achieved with the money raised.** If people can trust the institutions, they will get involved. On the other hand, when institutions become fossilized and stop developing, they lose the ability to engage with people. This leads us to the question of innovation and the need to create the space in which people will be free to make genuine choices.

Am I prepared to show leadership and do it in the way that people will be prepared to accept?  
**We have to step back from the question on “is there a generational divide”. The real point is that if people feel that what community involvement offers is relevant for them, they will engage in the community. If not, they will keep their distance.**