

MANAGING THE JEWISH COMMUNAL ENTERPRISE: CHANGING EXPECTATIONS AND NEW DIRECTIONS

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. . . three "revolutions"—individual rights, information systems and accountability—serve as the context of today's challenges to the communal service worker.

INTRODUCTION

In the emerging relationships between professional and lay leadership, a series of critical questions has been raised. Is there a new volunteer leader? What skills does a leader need to possess? What is the leader's expectation of the Jewish professional? Are Jewish communal agencies looking for the same traits, skills as twenty years ago? What should a professional realistically expect on a job?

In attempting to address these issues, we should look at Jewish communal service as a microcosm of our larger society. Over the course of the past twenty years we have witnessed and participated in three major trends viewed as revolutions within American society, and with many international implications. Each of these revolutions has had impact upon the very questions raised about this article's subject by the committee planning the meeting at which this paper was read. These revolutions are in the areas of civil rights, information systems and accountability. While their focus is not aimed toward the communal enterprise, their impact is, indeed, profound.

Presented to the Regional Conference of the Association of Jewish Community Organization Personnel, New York, May 16, 1986.

CIVIL RIGHTS "REVOLUTION"

First, we have gone through a civil rights revolution which has gone well beyond the executive, legislative and judicial redress within government. It has affected the way we look at groups and at individuals. For, when society "learned" that black is beautiful it also responded that Italian isn't ugly, Hispanic has "pizzazz" and Jewish isn't bad either! Ethnic resurgence as part of the pluralistic society is but one important component which accompanied the civil rights movement. We are not the melting pot; we are the beef stew with each of our components maintaining a distinct flavor. Lay leadership has felt this resurgence and it is witnessed in every community in the country with a heightened awareness of the need for Jewish education and cultural offerings leading to Jewish continuity.

There has been another equally important spin-off of the civil rights movement that has had a major effect on both professional and lay communities. An increased consciousness of women's issues is an integral part of the fabric of managing the Jewish communal enterprise. First, we have lost those wonderful "white-gloved" women who devoted their entire lives to this enterprise: serving on its committees, planning its functions, supporting its professionals. Today's full-time volunteer

community leader has taken off her white gloves and traded them in for the sterile gloves of the surgeon or the tools of a banker, architect, engineer or attorney.

To look at the experience of one Jewish human service agency—Altro Health and Rehabilitation Service of New York—is illustrative. In 1976 there were twelve women on its board of directors. Of these, one was engaged also in non-volunteer activity as a part-owner of a retail store. Eleven were women whose time was exclusively devoted to their families and their charitable activities.

In 1986, eleven women sit on the board. Of these, one, at the age of 93, has devoted her life to charitable activities. The remaining ten are active and involved professionals in commerce, the law, finance, communications and higher education.

To what degree have we accommodated our agencies to these changes? Are we as accessible to the professional woman with conflicting demands on her time as we once were to her mother and grandmother? How can we measure this? Are we sensitive to these time demands, in the starting times and ending times of our meetings?

Further, those of us who had the pleasure of working with these involved leaders of the past built natural alliances with them as they understood so well the complexities of our agencies, given the large amount of time they gave as volunteers. These natural alliances and supports have dissipated with the disappearance of these leaders, thereby making the professional work harder at interpreting the agency role and function to their successors and the community.

Another spin-off of the civil rights movement has to do with perceptions of control and power. Who really makes the decisions for the Jewish communal enterprise? Some time ago, a major UJA-Federation lay leader told me, "Some of the professionals think that giving lay peo-

ple responsibility means that they (the laity) get to choose the color of the tablecloths at a dinner function. What is needed is a better understanding that the lay people 'own' the entity. The professional's power comes from the fact that he can outlive any lay person because he stays there while the lay people rotate through positions." At the heart of this statement is the issue of ownership and control, an issue to which as community organizers we must constantly remain vigilant. Lao Tse wrote "A leader is where the people hardly know he exists; of a good leader when his work is done, his aim fulfilled, the people will say, 'We did this ourselves.'" I am still looking for a better definition of community organization than that of this ancient Chinese philosopher and poet.

INFORMATION SYSTEMS REVOLUTION

The second revolution which continues to sweep through the world is that described as the information revolution: the post-industrial surge which was speeding along up until the invention of the microchip and then it simply took off. John Naisbitt, in *Megatrends*, credits 1957 and the launching of Sputnik with the beginning of this information revolution. For he sees space exploration as having far more to do with earth communications and the creation of McLuhan's "global village" than with applied astronomy.

"The information society is an economic reality not an intellectual abstraction." Naisbitt goes on to point out, "We are drowning in information but starved for knowledge."¹ What does this have to do with managing the Jewish communal enterprise?

First, our lay leadership and the more progressive professionals do, in fact, know

1. John Naisbitt, *Megatrends*. New York: Warner Books, 1982, pp. 1-7.

that this revolution has taken place, do respect the powerful outcome that it represents, and have integrated it into virtually every component of their lives. Seat-of-the-pants decision-making with professionals pontificating based on their *Weltanschauung* and individual experience is simply no longer acceptable to leadership who appreciate the value of information.

In our role as planners, to what degree are we using current data for our needs assessments? In our role as administrators to what degree are accounting systems on line? Do we give our lay leadership monthly statements within several weeks of the close of the month? In our fundraising roles, to what degree is there real-time trend analysis enabling our decision makers to review policy directions for fundraising? This information revolution creates an expectation which requires us to be responsive or to fall behind and dangerously become party to the self-fulfilling prophecy which some people maintain about the inefficiency and ineffectiveness of non-profit human service organizations.

Another Eastern approach might be worth noting here. Pascale and Athos, in their study, *The Art of Japanese Management*, note:

Nevertheless, many readers will readily agree that a large part of a manager's job is managing upward. Clearly, communication is a two-way street; for superior and subordinate to work effectively, communication must flow both ways. And as communication flows, so does influence. Ironically, so pervasive is our assumption that superiors should do the influencing, leading and decision making, that subordinates, where they have the privilege of guiding their bosses, often feel resentment that *they* are not the boss. The reason is that this major and often very time-consuming function of the subordinate goes largely unrecognized. Subordinates find themselves living out a role in shadow governance and often doing so with vague irritation. Rarely do they ob-

tain legitimacy and therefore fulfillment for their supportive efforts, even though by Eastern standards such efforts are openly valued as intrinsic to the relationship's success.²

ACCOUNTABILITY REVOLUTION

The third revolution which is pervasive is the revolution of accountability. With increased governmental participation in funding came the inevitable consequence of increased need for accountability. The "golden rule" prevails. "He or she with the gold makes the rule." So, for example, in New York where \$48 million of UJA-Federation funding is annually leveraged into a local service system which spends close to \$2 billion, should we be surprised that agency social workers today spend more of their time in documentation than they do in direct service with their clients. What are the implications of this accountability revolution for our Jewish communal enterprise?

For one thing, we regularly see accountability of all service professionals spelled out in malpractice cases and settlements. For those in direct service settings, the management of potential risky issues is a daily affair in operations.

Here again, there is a need for greater sophistication by the professionals in managing accountability strategies: for them to look at the degree of service accessibility to clients, the acceptability of agency and service to clients and service outcome. Are Federation personnel applying the same level of accountability to member agencies to which they are accustomed to be asked by non-Federation funding and sponsoring sources?

These practices are well known in the businesses and professions of our lay

2. Richard Tanner Pascale & Anthony G. Athos, *The Art of Japanese Management*. New York: Simon and Schuster, 1981, p. 139.

leadership. We can provide a thrust toward a Copernican view of the accountability revolution instead of seeing it as yet another barrier to "good" service and to the warm and "wonderful" relationship with lay persons.

An organizational thrust to accomplish this end was outlined in a recent *Journal of Mental Health Administration* article as requiring:

- a. there must be a willingness to change;
- b. the administrator [professional] must integrate a willingness to be honest to himself/herself as an administrator [professional], including working through such catastrophic fantasies as closing programs where indicated;
- c. there must be a strong and inherent belief in the efficacy of agency services, including an overall belief in the value of the overall human service delivery system;
- d. there must be clarity between an agency's responsibility to its staff and its responsibility to its clients.³

It often appears that Federations have fallen behind other funding and sponsoring sources in the valid and constructive demands for accountability. For if there is to be planning, accountability becomes a crucial component of the creative planning cycle. John Welch, General Electric's chief executive officer has stated,

I am convinced that if the rate of change inside the institution is less than the rate of change outside, the end is in sight. The only question is the timing of that end. We must have some of the freshness, the irreverence, the desire to challenge and question that comes from those who are impatient, who buck the system, who can see

the possibilities of a fresh start. People want to come out for a second bow when the world is waiting for the second act.⁴

We need to ask ourselves and our agencies the questions which get at the heart of these issues; to identify the mission of our agencies; to develop strategic plans to accomplish that mission; to break down "results" into goals and objectives that are measurable and reportable.

We need to develop and be given the tools to accomplish these objectives. For many years, a social worker or a communal service worker was assumed to be doing good things for the community. The age of accountability has dispelled that assumption. The newly laid burden is one of finding the means and terms of communicating the value of agency efforts to the lay public.

CONCLUSION

These three "revolutions"—individual rights, information systems and accountability—serve as the context of today's challenges to the communal service worker. The roles of community organizers include responsibilities as educators, enlighteners and motivators. There is a terribly difficult line that must be towed at the same time—the reality of resources that never meet all community needs. Yet there is always the striving to do better at meeting the agendas of the Jewish communal enterprise.

The skills that the lay leader can contribute beyond the commitment to serve are organizational, analytical, and most important, communicational. The lay leader's expectation of the Jewish professional is that he/she must be faster than a speeding bullet, more powerful than a

3. Jeffrey R. Solomon & Daniel Wartenberg, "Using External Requirements for Internal Purposes," *Journal of Mental Health Administration*, April, 1986.

4. John Welch, as quoted in *Creative Planning Throughout the Organization*, by James F. Bandraoski. New York: American Management Association, 1985.

locomotive and able to leap tall buildings in a single bound! He/she must also have a vision, bound in reality but tied to potential. There must be a sense of honesty and the ability to deliver even bad news to the lay leadership.

Jewish communal agencies are looking for the same traits and skills that they did twenty years ago. In addition, the professional needs to encourage in the new Jewish lay leader the ability to get to people's hearts through their heads; to find balance between the caring ideal and realistic expectations. The professional

must be able to use contemporary tools to enhance this very caring effort.

Finally, the professional can expect to be tested on a regular basis. "You're only as good as your last campaign," represents an attitude that may deepen over time as these three major trends take further hold. Yet, the professional chose to be in this spot because there is something very special and compelling about the communal challenge and in his successful work he/she can expect the very best that a society can offer—earning a living by being of service to our community.