

# THE APPROACHING MILLENNIUM

## Challenge and Opportunity

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A new world order is emerging in which governments, global corporations, and major organizations are searching for leaders who can comprehend and harness the multitude of rapid changes influencing their ability to survive and to prosper. If leader are having difficulty comprehending these structural changes, is it any wonder that individuals for whom they are responsible are groping, confused, nervous, and, in some cases, disheartened. Others are on a spending spree, as though consumerism and material goods can replace the increasing void they sense created by a changing value system, a changing reward system, and the unnerving effects of the ever-widening gap between those who have and the many, many more who have not.

The last decade of the twentieth century is referred to as the decade of geometric change. Structural changes in the economy and its underlying management and economic theory, along with global demographic changes caused in part by increasing numbers of populations on the move, are resulting in the creation of xenophobic societies seeking to lock their gates to all newcomers.

The bipolar global power base has become unipolar as a result of the demise of the Soviet Union. We are advancing toward an era in which power will lie not in the hands of those nations with mastery of air and sea power, employing aircraft carriers, stealth bombers, and vast armies, but rather with individuals and group-affiliated fanatics who will have the power to destroy entire cities with instruments no larger than a cigarette case.

The three underlying principles of wealth—capital, labor, and raw materials—are rapidly changing. Labor is losing its leverage in the formation of wealth; capital is global, digital, and portable; and raw materials can increasingly be manufactured in the laboratory. Many books have been written

about our rapidly changing world (see Suggested Readings). The purpose of this article is *not* to delve into the pace and nature of change and its effects but rather to explore how to harness that change to enhance the survivability of our organizations and of our Jewish communal service structure, thus ensuring continued services that are a vital part of Jewish continuity. There is still a window of opportunity that will allow time for orderly change in the transition to the 21st century, but we must take advantage of it now.

Technology is the key we must learn to master if we are to successfully confront drastic changes in governmental funding philosophy, with its increasing abdication of Rousseau's social contract responsibilities, and the metamorphosis of corporate philanthropy into an instrument of corporate strategic planning. There is an increasing diminution of young Jewish leaders' willingness to accept a Jewish tax and to instinctively react the way their elders did to the seminal events in Jewish history—the Holocaust, the founding of the State of Israel, and the endangered Jewish populations in the former Soviet Union.

### QUALITY WITH EFFICIENCY

As more of our lay leaders come from the corporate worlds of finance, banking, law, accounting, real estate, and technology, they will be seeking more efficiency in the way their dollars are spent. They will expect an increasing use of technology in order to achieve more "bang for the buck." They will view provision of services in this context—quality without efficiency will be increasingly unacceptable. We must respond by accepting this principle but with the following caveat—efficiency without quality is unconscionable for the Jewish community. To accomplish both efficiency and quality in a world of managed care, the concept of which

is being applied to *all* areas of operation, not just health care, we, as leaders, must become more technologically knowledgeable and must help create new products, such as programmatic computer software, modified service delivery systems, and distance learning, which will provide higher quality services at an increasingly lower cost per unit of service. We must constantly search for opportunities that will enable us to make a relatively modest capital expenditure in technology, product, and space to achieve lower operating costs in the ongoing provision of services.

For example, the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee and F.E.G.S. have created a joint venture corporation for MIFNE, a computer-based series of software products that incorporates this principle as its underlying philosophy and is already beginning to achieve its goal of improving quality while reducing costs in such diversified functional fields as mental health, developmental disabilities, special education, youth services, and economic development. These computer software programs, each designed for a specific population requiring services, all have in common the ability to do the following:

- make the computer quickly and easily understandable to those who have little or no familiarity with its use
- empower the clinician, teacher, or counselor as well as the student, client, or patient
- provide the instructor, teacher, and clinician with objective and subjective feedback
- provide the student, client, or patient with an immediate sense of accomplishment, feedback, and satisfaction

Efficiency is achieved because the MIFNE software enables one professional to work with several clients at a time. For example, one teacher can work with several students, and the counselor can utilize a group technique to enhance individual counseling. The savings in dollars are matched by the improvement in quality and outcomes.

In another move to increase efficiency, Group Therapy Alternatives, a private for-

profit consulting firm, and F.E.G.S. created a private corporation called Group Interactions, Inc. This corporation has developed a new product for mental health managed care, which uses new methods of short-term group therapy to supplement individual therapy where appropriate. In an era of managed care, the ability of a provider to enhance and increase service while reducing the cost for each unit of service is a necessity. The search for and creative development of new products that can accomplish this goal are essential.

### SHARED SUPPORT SERVICES

There is an old story in which God reveals Himself to President Clinton, who asks, "When will Congress give the President everything he desires?," and God answers, "Not in your lifetime." Then God reveals Himself to Boris Yeltsin, who asks, "When will Russia become the leader of the capitalist world?," and God answers, "Not in your lifetime." Then God reveals Himself to the Prime Minister of Israel, who asks, "When will Jews work together and act as one for the benefit of their people?," and God responds, "Not in my lifetime." We can no longer afford the luxury of duplication of services; intrasystem competition for government, corporate, and private dollars; and lack of joint planning.

Although economics drives change, we cannot permit our organizations to be reactive and dependent upon the whims of the economy. We must provide leadership that can analyze, predict, and plan to make economic change work for us. We cannot just talk about shared services; we must actually create them and insist on their utilization.

We can no longer afford the luxury of having all of the member agencies in the local federation operate their own management information systems; for example, billing Medicaid. The cost for the product delivered is simply too high. We have long understood that ADP provides payroll services to thousands of for-profit and nonprofit corporations throughout the United States, many of which are member agencies of federations. Yet we fail to create our own Central Management

Information System (MIS) Service Bureau or Human Services Corporation or Temporary Personnel Service for our agencies.

The New York Association for New Americans (NYANA), the largest resettlement agency in the United States, has had to develop a sophisticated MIS in order to serve tens of thousands of Russian immigrants. F.E.G.S., the largest nonprofit human service organization in the United States, had to develop a large sophisticated MIS operation in order to support a broad variety of services, including mental health, developmental disabilities, residential care, employment, educational support, skills training, economic development, family services, and career counseling, each with its own set of government regulations, rules, and funding sources.

NYANA and F.E.G.S recognized that neither agency could continue to pay for increasingly expensive equipment that becomes obsolete in shorter and shorter periods of time, as well as for the highly trained information systems staff required to operate a sophisticated MIS operation. Both organizations created a separate MIS corporation under joint ownership that provides information services for both organizations, as well as sells these services at a reduced cost to other organizations. Both organizations had previously created a joint human resources corporation that provides human resources needs to both NYANA and F.E.G.S. These shared infrastructure corporations result in massive savings to both organizations. As these infrastructure corporations sell their services to other organizations, the unit cost of operation further decreases and the income increases.

We must find ways of reducing replication of services, but with compassion, an understanding of local political realities, and minimal harm to the organizations or to the community. By using lean production techniques of outsourcing, organizations can contract out non-core services to other organizations in the Jewish communal service structure and vice versa, without diminishing their significance and role in the community.

It takes money—large amounts of it—to ensure that our people receive services they need through a global network of Jewish communal service. But money alone will not ensure its survival. Intelligence, along with an understanding that we all have to continue learning from each other, is essential. We must accept the fact that regardless of titles, achievement, and status, we all have a lifetime need to learn.

At the same time, we must flatten our organizational structure and management style, reducing our dependence on “pyramid style” management while continuously empowering future Jewish communal servants. There is, within the global Jewish communal network, more than sufficient brains, creativity, commitment, and yes, even technological awareness that, if properly shared and implemented, can lead us into a 21st century marked with even greater achievement than that of the 20th century.

Above all, the responsibility of those now in leadership positions—lay and professional—is to seek out those young people who can be tomorrow’s leaders, to teach them, and to learn from them so that we together can provide the leadership that the Jewish people have become accustomed to and are entitled to. We can afford to do no less.

#### SUGGESTED READINGS

- Bold New World: The Essential Road Map to the 21st Century* by William Knoke. Simon and Schuster Audio.
- Competition in the 21st Century* by Kirk W. M. Tyson. St. Lucie Press.
- The End of Work* by Jeremy Rifkin. G. P. Putnam’s Sons.
- Going Virtual* by Raymond Grenier and George Metes, Prentice Hall.
- The Machine That Changed the World* by James P. Womack, Daniel T. Jones and Daniel Roos. Rawson Associates.
- Managing for the Future* by Peter F. Drucker, Truman Talley Books/Dutton.
- Trends 2000* by Gerald Celente. Warner Books.
- Maimonides, Shakespeare, and Machiavelli wouldn’t hurt.