

The Worker's Role in Organizing and Serving a Jewish Community in an Outlying Area*

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As more American Jews move to demographically dispersed areas on the peripheries of traditional Jewish community borders, reach-out programs increasingly form the basis of communal response. The worker's role in organizing and serving such new communities can be specified and a worker can be deployed for these tasks with greater prospects of success.

Introduction

Federations throughout the United States are grappling with shifting Jewish populations within their traditional boundary lines and beyond. Suburbs and nearby rural areas hitherto unsettled by Jews are developing concentrations of Jewish population on the peripheries of traditional boundary lines. Federations struggle with the effects of demographic dispersion in terms of Federation fundraising requirements and planning and service demands from residents of these areas. One common response with varied applications is the deployment of an outreach worker whose role has been defined in several ways: ombudsman, extension worker, area services coordinator, community developer, or community organizer.

The Federation worker whose outreach assignment is defined by community organization or community development must be prepared to make an enormous time commitment to his work if he is to accomplish his tasks. His assignment will carry a central responsibility for fundraising, community organization, group work, and community planning. To fulfill these assignments in a demographically dispersed "new"

community, he will first need to organize and manage many other conflicting time and role demands that will emerge.

This article describes various roles that the author played in carrying out his assignment as community developer in the South Peninsula area of the Jewish Community Federation of San Francisco. It demonstrates how the different roles are interrelated and build upon one another to enable the community development process to take place.

Fundraiser

The Jewish Welfare Federation began solely as a fundraising organization and its only exposure in the South Peninsula Jewish community until this current program began was through its annual fundraising campaign. When this worker was given the assignment, there had been no growth in the annual campaign for several years. It was clear that obtaining greater annual campaign yields was a major task expectation the Federation had of this worker. After the worker spent several months analyzing past performance and structure of the campaign, he prepared a blueprint for a two-year program of restructuring and improving the mechanism and image of the annual drive. Two areas of glaring weakness were identified. The first weakness was that the volunteer leadership base was inadequate and there was no concerted campaign worker recruitment and training program. The second

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weakness was that the image of the Jewish Community Federation in the community was less than positive.

The professional worker takes a leadership role in making changes in fundraising campaigns. To accomplish this primary task, group process and leadership training methods are employed in the development of a leadership cadre. More than in other small group efforts, the worker's personal example and leadership style are necessary models. The analysis of leadership weakness in past efforts indicated a lack of enthusiasm for the effort on the part of the volunteers, a lack of understanding of the ultimate uses for the funds raised, and a lack of dedication on the part of the volunteers in past efforts.

Part of the problem was the almost negative image the Federation had in the community. The image problem, though inimical to campaign, could not be reversed by the campaign effort itself. The Federation gave the worker broad responsibilities and authority so as to make possible a total effort of community development with the thought that successful community development efforts led by Federation would have positive effects on the annual campaign.

With this in mind, the first effort was to capitalize on the chauvinism of volunteers about their South Peninsula community and on their growing awareness that, increasingly, programs in the community were being funded through Federation and that this financial dependence would grow. The worker called attention to the correlation between more vigorous and productive campaigns and the ability of the community to hasten the growth of its own service agencies and Jewish programs. The worker set about recruiting a leadership cadre of men with whom he had worked before in special campaign projects he had coordinated from the San Francisco office of the Federation. They, in turn, would recruit needed volunteers using the same

methods and phrases. A campaign chairman was pre-selected by the worker and then formally recruited by the general campaign chairman in San Francisco. Together, this chairman and the worker developed a program of personal recruitment, solicitor training, leadership motivation and campaign administration that was implemented.

The thrust of the campaign in the South Peninsula was to train a group of thirty to forty volunteers from whom future leadership for the South Peninsula Campaign could be drawn and who would concentrate on increasing the giving of current contributors of \$500 or more. These were men who had all agreed to participate in several hours of seminars on the nature of the Jewish Community Federation and its beneficiaries as well as in a solicitor training program that used group dynamics and role playing methods to teach effective communication and fundraising techniques. The leaders of this group participated in a two-week study mission to Israel prior to the campaign through which their education and motivation were completed.

Internal evaluation and feedback mechanisms were built into the restructured fundraising drive to facilitate a two-way process of eliminating further problems and weaknesses and reinforcing the commitment of the thirty to forty workers. The Federation leadership reviewed the plans for this process and the early elements of its implementation and endorsed this approach. Moreover, the leadership made clear the commitment to a two-year process of development and, therefore, the willingness to wait until the next campaign to realize increased dollar amounts from the South Peninsula. However, their expectations were partially fulfilled in the first reorganized campaign.

The role of fundraiser was a source of great personal tension for the worker in this community. It is this role that is the primary base of evaluation the agency

traditionally uses. Use of group process methods is not widespread in fundraising drives, and often workers use other means to meet their task responsibilities. The Federation's commitment to the longer-term process of community development made possible the implementation of these nontraditional methods—which have proved elsewhere their validity to the long-term health of fundraising campaign structures and increased yields. And so this area of great conflict between task goals and process goals became an area of an optimal blending of process methods with the achievement of the required tasks.

Community Organizer

The community was not without Jewish organizations and agencies when this process began. There were three congregations, two of them older than twenty years, a small Jewish day school, a small Jewish community center, a Hillel Foundation at Stanford University, and several membership organizations, including a significant chapter of Hadassah with about five hundred members. For more than ten years there had been Jewish Community Federation and Israel Bond fundraising campaigns, and an active but aging Federation Women's Division which extended its activity beyond fundraising to education and various volunteer service functions in the community. In fact, for three years there had been a Federation office staffed by one half-time fundraiser and one secretary. In all, these congregations, organizations, and agencies served fewer than one-third of the known Jewish families living in the community.

Over eight months the worker met all the leadership, lay and professional, current and past, of these existing organizations. These meetings took the form of interviews and meetings in which the worker stressed his interest in learning from these leaders and the Federation's interest in better serving the community. Almost without

exception, leadership expressed a desire to be "brought together" in a more cooperative way and a hope that Federation might serve as the "honest broker" or "force" for more cooperative community building endeavors.

Often conflicts existed between the desire of volunteer leadership for interagency cooperation and the professional leader's expression of territorialism. One example of this conflict was in the relationship between the oldest synagogue and the growing Jewish community center. The Rabbi of the synagogue perceived himself as the leader of the Jewish community and his synagogue as the major organization of the community. The Center Director viewed his charge as including outreach to the unaffiliated and launched a major membership drive. The mailings of that effort reached many congregation members and the Rabbi was outraged at this "encroachment." The worker met with each man individually and ascertained that they shared a common goal of identifying unaffiliated Jews and encouraging them to participate in one or more Jewish organization.

The worker learned from his other professional colleagues in the community that this was a universally shared goal. The worker then invited all the professionals to a meeting to discuss this common goal, to share other agenda, and, if possible, to ascertain where all might cooperate to fulfill the communal goal.

The group arrived at a plan to conduct a cooperative program to reach the unaffiliated through communal programming for major events. The first such event was a community-wide Hanukkah celebration which the Federation office financed and coordinated, but in which each organization played a role, gained publicity, and exposed its organization to many unaffiliated Jews in a cooperative venture.

Feedback from the Rabbi and Center Director suggested that these efforts at

least papered over the conflict between the synagogue and the Jewish Center. Moreover, the two groups began to talk to each other, and their staff members began to work together towards community-wide programs along with their colleagues from the other synagogues and organizations. The professionals' new involvement and interest spread to their volunteers as well. Several people from different organizations told this worker the same thing: the expanded, active Federation presence was very helpful in encouraging rapport and furthering cooperative efforts. Federation began to prove itself a valuable addition to "help the South Peninsula's community to grow."

Group Worker

Another primary task of the worker was to develop interest among young professional and entrepreneurial families in the community in becoming involved in the various aspects of Jewish communal organization. A specific agenda of Federation is the recruitment and training of future leaders for Federation and other Jewish organizations in the community. An example of the worker's role in carrying out this assignment is his involvement in creating and working with a young leadership training program known as the Leadership Development Committee of the Peninsula (LDC).

The LDC began with drawing together six young (in their thirties) couples who were "prominent" among their peers, and could, therefore, be called upon to bring their friends and acquaintances out for the programs. This core group was identified by polling senior Federation leaders and the rabbis in the community to identify "future leaders" who were ready for involvement in communal activities. The creation of this leadership group was one of the worker's first efforts. The development of a membership of over one hundred and forty took several months. Members ranged

in age from thirty to forty-five. They generally lived within a fifteen mile radius of Palo Alto. Members came once per month for a lecture-discussion on a topic of great Jewish concern as well as a social hour. After fifteen months, LDC had diverse programming and more intensive leadership training programs. The annual program cycle included a weekend retreat, intensive, smaller group discussion programs that met in homes rather than in the usual large meeting hall, and large meeting lecture-discussions.

The worker had the roles of processing the insights of the leadership cadre, of interpreting the needs of the Jewish community for such a group, of helping them to see themselves as leaders of the LDC, of pushing them towards expanding possibilities of involvement in the Jewish community, of encouraging the group to take on, analyze, and handle increasingly complex organizational tasks, and of encouraging this leadership group to draw new workers from the membership at large into committee and leadership roles in order to mount the diversifying programs of LDC.

Community Planner

The professionals in the South Peninsula knew that this worker had been a member of the social planning and budgeting staff of the Jewish Community Federation prior to this assignment. This fact was introduced at the beginning into the South Peninsula staff meetings. At the same time, the Federation leadership and the worker had discussed a plan whereby at least the first eighteen months of the worker's assignment would be in the area of community development and fundraising, before he would be requested by the agency to undertake the construction of a formal community planning process that would relate in defined ways to the central planning and budgeting operation.

The fact that the worker had indicated to

all the existing congregations, agencies, and organizations the Federation's intention to be a positive force in building the Jewish community signalled to the lay and professional people in these organizations that Federation seemed prepared to undertake a formal planning process in the community. There were, after all, planning agenda items in each organization that were stymied for lack of professional guidance as well as for lack of relationship to some community-wide service plan. Before assigning the worker to the community, the Federation had aborted a facility planning process related to a special building-fund drive, and therefore had raised expectations that Federation staff would now formally pick up the community's concerns about well-elderly housing, Jewish library resources, vocational services, expanded family and child counselling services, and the expansion of Jewish community center facilities.

The various organizations called upon the worker to organize a community planning process while the agency that employed him was not at all prepared for the consequences. The Federation leaders instructed the worker to stall the process; i.e., provide minimal professional input towards creating a formal planning process while, at the same time, coordinating ongoing communal programs. The staff meetings provided a major forum for carrying out the latter task and the fact that there was some minimal movement towards a planning process seemed to satisfy the demand. The worker's colleagues in the community expressed their perception that meeting on a regular basis and finding specific areas of cooperation served the community-at-large as well as their own organizations.

The other professionals saw this worker as more than the "honest broker" in this context. He was viewed as the leader when it came to discussing communal solutions. He also functioned as an ombudsman with

regard to extending certain agency services into the community.

By collecting the referral statistics and some anecdotal material about congregants who had needs that the rabbis were unable to meet (e.g., employment counselling), the worker was able to persuade colleagues in the central Federation office that certain San Francisco-based agency services were needed immediately, on an extension basis, in the South Peninsula. Federation began to push these agencies to extend service. The worker, through his relationship with the executives of the Jewish Family and Children's Services and of the Jewish Vocational and Career Counselling Service, influenced them into placing the need for extension services on their board agendas. Within four months each of the agencies assigned a part-time worker. The Federation *shaliach* (an Israeli youth worker) was assigned two days per week to the South Peninsula community to work with the Stanford Hillel Foundation, the Jewish Center's youth worker, and the congregational religious school principals.

The worker had rented extra office space in his suite with the expectation that this "free" space might be needed one day for extension workers. This space he now assigned to the extension workers of the three agencies who were assigned to the community.

Since service needs become clearer when some service is given, the presence of these three agencies served as the beginning for more adequate services. Since success enhances the worker's chances of future success, these efforts may have constructive consequences when a formal, volunteer-directed, planning process begins.

Community Relations Consultant

The Metropolitan Jewish Community Relations Council (JCRC) was concerned with coordinating the activities of the various Jewish agencies concerned with intergroup relations: congregations, Anti-

Defamation League, American Jewish Congress, American Jewish Committee, etc. Its purpose was to be the instrument through which these diverse organizations that represent various constituencies can achieve consensus on matters of policy and common coordinated strategy in response to various issues. The South Peninsula Jewish community had always been somewhat maverick in the activities of its various Jewish "defense" agencies. The JCRC had never been able adequately to staff the activities of its South Peninsula section, which only exacerbated the negative feelings of Jewish activists in the South Peninsula towards the central body.

In response to JCRC's request of the Federation leadership for assistance in the task of organizational development of its South Peninsula section, the worker was drawn into the process first as consultant and then as the organizer and area staff coordinator for this function.

The principal job of knitting organizations together was aided greatly by the separate development of the South Peninsula Jewish community staff group, but the job of drawing everyone together remained difficult when the volunteer-staffed organizations were called together. Bringing all the organization's lay officers together on a monthly basis to deal with common community relations concerns was not difficult, but the meetings began with considerable conflict.

Small chapters of national Jewish women's organizations, such as ORT, Hadassah, and Brandeis Women had functioned in the community for a number of years. These and other local affiliates of national organizations had never been professionally staffed and their officers, who had been founders of these organizations in the South Peninsula, had developed set ways of operating. The creation of a professionally staffed JCRC in the South Peninsula seemed to provide an oppor-

tunity for these officers to advance the particular ideological orientations of their organizations on a community-wide basis.

Since JCRC serves as a coordinator for community-wide action on the basis of a consensus, it typically reflects a broad spectrum of opinion on various Jewish issues. At the first three JCRC meetings, some organizations offered many resolutions and programs for public demonstrations on behalf of positions which were not consonant with long-standing community policies achieved through Metropolitan JCRC debates. Staff had been charged with interpreting JCRC's policies on these matters and their "authority" came into sharp conflict with these leaders.

The worker endeavored to interpret the long-standing policies of the JCRC to this committee in an effort to help the delegates develop a sense of the purpose of the coordinating agency. Meetings continued to be disrupted by a shrinking group of representatives of a minority position who seemed unwilling to change their views of JCRC and its functions to conform with that of their colleagues (who gradually perceived JCRC as a coordinating rather than a direct service agency), but they also seemed unwilling to resign from the organization, and so they remained a small, not-too-loyal, opposition.

Staffing this organization was a time-consuming assignment, but one through which the worker came into contact with many small volunteer-staffed organizations with which he might otherwise not have had contact. Because much of the Federation's work in the community became visible through the worker's activity, it broadened the positive image of Federation beyond exclusive fundraising concerns to direct concern with vital political issues affecting the Jewish community. It also broadened the awareness of the change in Federation's role on the part of a larger segment of the community.

Counsellor

Although the South Peninsula Jewish community was not without its rabbis and caseworkers, people turned to this worker for the kind of advice most appropriately requested from those more traditional sources. When it was clear that someone had turned to him as a confidant or for personal advice, the worker always offered to make a referral to a rabbi or Jewish Family Service caseworker. The usual replies, "The rabbi doesn't understand," or "I don't need therapy, I need advice!" suggested that individuals came to the worker for this counsel on the basis of a relationship developed in other aspects of his work.

One example may illustrate this role expectation. A couple in the leadership of the LDC program, described above, in which both partners grew up in rather assimilated Jewish homes in the East, turned to the worker for help in dealing with their young children who seemed to resent being Jewish. (For example, they hated to miss school for Jewish holidays.) Each of the parents approached the worker separately. Each told his or her story about growing up in an assimilated home. When the worker recommended that their rabbi might help, the response from each was that, "He didn't have good advice." The worker recommended some basic ways of relating to these children about Judaism and suggested articles the parents could read and things they could do with their children to improve the children's attitude toward Judaism.

The worker was younger than these parents and was not himself a parent. The fact that these parents, among other people, turned to the worker with family and business problems for advice, solace, and assistance, and felt comfortable in turning to him was not a function of age. The Federation role itself seemed to suggest authority, trust, and stability—at

least sufficient to inspire confidence in the worker's understanding of and advice about these problems. Any success they had with the worker's suggestion further enhanced his stature.

Teacher and Authority of Jews and Judaism

This worker was called on in a variety of settings, ranging from committees which he staffed to study groups in the community, to be an informal teacher and an authority on Jews and Judaism. In the LDC especially, the worker had to teach the Organizing Committee about certain Jewish rituals (rules of *kashrut* and holiday celebrations) in ways that were not mere expositions, but that led to group discussion of Jewish symbols and rituals and their importance to the maintenance of Jewish identity.

The worker was invited to speak to various groups of Federation leaders and when necessary had to prepare lessons or lectures on aspects of American Jewish life. In checking with colleagues, the worker found that this was not a common expectation of workers in Federations. Though Federation executives are called on to give fundraising speeches and expositions on the nature of Federation, few have expected the Federation worker to be an authority on Jews, Jewish life, and Judaism.

Two aspects of this new role expectation are noteworthy. The worker was "examined" for authenticity as a Jewish role model and as an authority of Jewish life for those with whom he interacted. Even in the South Peninsula staff meetings described above, the worker's particular knowledge of American Jewish sociology and of American Jewish organizations was valued by his colleagues. The second striking aspect was that the teaching role had been assigned to the Federation worker because of the paucity of qualified teachers in this particular demographically dispersed Jewish community.

Conclusion

Though seeming to impede the performance of the fundraising task, performing these secondary roles may be essential to competent performance of the primary task. If he enters an area where there are relatively few Jewish resource people, the worker can expect to become a prominent Jewish figure. He can expect to

be called upon to serve in non-traditional ways: counsellor, teacher, and Jewish authority, among others. If he can conceptualize, anticipate, and manage those various role demands as part of the community development process, the worker will be better prepared for and more effective in his assignment.