Social Media & Communication
We are surrounded by communication. Messages are sent and received from our congregations thousands of times a day. How can we, as administrators and executive directors, assure that our communications are effective? How can we make sure the messages are heard? The new strategies for communication are no longer pronouncements, they are conversations. We engage our community and our members in conversation. We listen, and we respond. We take it in, and we understand what our members need and want from us. The new strategies make personal connections and they strengthen our communities.

We have reached inside and outside NATA to bring you the newest strategies for communication in our field (we even coerced a family member to help!). You will also find the voices of some of our colleagues who serve their congregations through the role of communications director. Thank you, one and all, for your contributions.

One of the authors included in this Journal is Jeff Manis (z”l). Jeff was recommended to us because he and his congregation and staff understand and embrace new strategies for communication, including social media. As a colleague, Jeff was an example for all, and many of us were also lucky enough to count him as a good friend. He taught us to strive to be “effective, efficient and excellent,” and that will forever remain with us. Thank you, Jeff, for your quiet ways and ever-present sense of the honor and blessing it is to serve our members, congregations and the Jewish community.

We are honored to co-edit the NATA Journal. We follow in the footsteps of distinguished colleagues, including most recently Esther Herst and Marc Swatez. We hope you find this issue informative and thought-provoking. Share it with your staff and lay leaders, as you find new ways to engage in conversations with your congregation and community.

L’shalom,

Betti and Jeanne
Dear Colleagues:

Most of us spend hours a day developing our professional and personal relationships. We do so in face-to-face meetings and conversations, on the phone, in letters and post cards, and through a variety of technology-driven mediums such as Facebook, Twitter, texting, e-mail and so on. Increasingly, using technology has become the communication method of choice because of its ability to reach so many people at once. It is quick (in both getting the message out and in reaching many simultaneously), is efficient, is much less expensive than sending by traditional mail and is easily tailored to different audiences.

This Journal looks at these new, and some not so new (more than a year old!), forms of communication and provides information about these technologies and how they can be used. More importantly, the Journal considers the effectiveness of these different means of communication, and challenges us to think about the audience to whom we are trying to communicate, the type of message that we are communicating and the extent to which personalization is important.

My 80+ year-old mother proudly has an iPhone which she mostly remembers to turn on, but she would never understand how to retrieve a text message from me, and she has to print out the synagogue’s monthly e-bulletin because my father does not (dare I say, will not!) use a computer. On the other hand, how many of us have come to understand that you cannot expect to reach any 23 year-olds unless you text or use Facebook – or perhaps in saying this I am already out of date!

I want to thank Betti Greenstein and Jeanne Kort Adler for this wonderful issue, the first under their co-editorship, and to acknowledge the contribution of Esther Herst, the immediate past editor. I hope that the Journal continues to challenge us to learn more about best practices in the synagogue world.

Livia D. Thompson, FTA
NATA President

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**Correction on Spring 2011 Journal**

In Jeanne Adler’s article, the writer of the original prayer, May the Door of this Synagogue be Wide Enough, was mistakenly attributed to Sydney Greenberg. The author is Rabbi Sidney Greenberg, one of the leading Conservative rabbis of the last half of the 20th century.
Communicate: to share knowledge of or information about; make known; to transmit information, thought, or feeling so that it is satisfactorily received or understood; to connect.

Communication: a process by which information is exchanged.

Everyone communicates; but not everyone communicates in the same way. Everyone receives information; but not everyone receives information in the same way.

Congregations have been communicating information about their synagogues and programs for years. Members are still joining. Programs are still being attended. Their information is being shared. Their presence is known. But, are they reaching as many people as possible? Are they effectively utilizing the tools that are available to convey their information? If you’ve seen the movie “Field of Dreams” you are familiar with the quote “If you build it, he will come.” For many of us, we feel that if we offer a great program, then everyone will come. But if we don’t provide everyone with detailed information about the program, or don’t tell them about it early enough, they are not going to come.

Does one have to be a communications major in order to effectively communicate information? Not at all. As a matter of fact, many congregations do not even have the luxury of having a full-time staff person to handle communications and marketing. Many have simply assigned the task to an employee who is perceived as the ‘least busy’ on staff. And, often times, the staff member tasked with designing the marketing materials and promotions has been assigned the task at a late date and cannot make headway in communicating the intended message to the intended audience.

Only a few years ago, Temple Sinai used our monthly newsletter to convey the majority of our information. Our website had general information about the synagogue and upcoming programs, but was not always ‘up-to-date.’ We sent bi-weekly eBlasts to the congregation informing them of upcoming programs. We gradually started implementing other forms of communication; but, in the summer of 2009, everything changed. The cover of the Reform Judaism magazine read “Cyber Sanctuary – How the latest technology is changing Jewish Life.” That article got the attention of our Senior Rabbi, Ron Segal, and he wanted Temple Sinai to strive towards what the article was talking about. At the annual Board Retreat that same year, Rabbi Brad Levenberg and a few board members were talking about iPhone apps and how great it would be if Temple Sinai had our very own app. To move ahead with our communication plans, we had to put a plan in place; otherwise it was going to be done half-heartedly, ineffectively or, possibly, not at all.

How does one start to create a strategic plan for communications? By communicating. Here is a basic model that you can implement so that your organization can begin to formulate a vision and a strategic plan for communications:

Form a committee
Designate the staff member that will be in charge of ALL of your communications. Then have this person form a committee. The committee should include one person who is familiar with public relations/communications, one person who has graphic design knowledge and one successful sales person as the core part of the group. Visioning and strategic planning should not be secretive. You have chosen key people to participate in this committee and it’s important that you utilize their talents and visions.

Create your vision
A good communications strategy starts with the synagogue’s mission statement. From there, one should explore how the communications team can best accomplish the mission. Build and consistently use key messages or key phrases.

Identify your audience(s)
You will find that you will have target groups for many of your programs and promotions. What type of information do they need to receive? When is the frequency for communicating? You need to connect with your audience as much as possible, but don’t overdo it. Look internally. How do YOU like to receive information? What catches your eye and peaks your interest? Look at past history. What worked and what didn’t work? Brainstorm obstacles that have or could prevent you from engaging your congregation. The list may include lack of interest, timing
of the program, accessibility of program and insufficient information about the program.

**Determine what communication vehicles you will use**

Identify the tools and activities that are most appropriate to communicating your key messages to your audiences.

- **Website:** This will be your most dynamic tool. Make sure your information is always up-to-date and as interactive as possible.
- **Make it easy for people to RSVP:** Use online reservations, such as Wufoo, whenever possible.
- **Social networks:**
  - Connect with your audience and promote your programs over Facebook and/or Twitter.
  - Use blogs to engage your audience.
  - eBlasts. Don’t overuse eBlasts. If you send them too often, you will find that people stop reading them. The standard ‘open rate’ for mass emails is around 35 percent. If you hit that consistently, you are successful with this campaign. Additionally, you don’t need to put all of the information about the program in the body of the email. Use {Read More} and create a link to your website for details.
- **Printed materials:** Some congregants still prefer to receive the newsletter in printed format, but you can upload a PDF copy of the newsletter to your website for those who want to view it digitally. Design an attractive and memorable brochure for your Adult Education programs and/or Teen Programs. Post a PDF copy of the brochure to your website.

Stay relevant. Although it would be cool to use Quick Response (QR) Codes, not everyone will be able to take advantage of them. Rather, the idea is to pay attention to the tools – hardware, software, apps – that are being used by your constituents in their professional and personal lives. This is where you want to focus your attention and resources.

**Develop a three-year plan.**

It is best to work within the confines of your existing infrastructure, staffing, resource allotment, hardware and software available, in order to determine where you are now, where you SHOULD be, and where you want to be in three years. It is good to be ambitious, but it is important to be realistic. If your operating budget does not have a technology or marketing budget, seek funding from your endowment committee and/or private donors in your congregation to help you reach your goals.

Consider performing a communications audit both now, and over the three-year period, to assess the effectiveness of your strategy with your audiences. You should use open questions with appropriate prompts and benchmarks. Consider and discuss the results carefully with your committee and use them to amend your strategy.

Questions you should consider asking are:

- What do you read/see/hear?
- What works/doesn’t work?
- What do you want to see more of?
- What information do you need that you are not currently getting?
- How often do you want us to communicate with you?

A proactive communications strategy and strategic plan will help the synagogue adapt to contemporary trends, create persuasive messaging, and encourage not just communication, but communal pride. The most important part of this entire process: DREAM BIG. If you can’t do it right now, you will more than likely be able to do it later. Hey, we did; and now Temple Sinai has our very own iPhone app. And, yes, we’re still dreaming.
As technology develops, people are more interconnected than ever before. Social media platforms of all types empower us to share our thoughts, feelings, likes, dislikes and – in some cases – our physical location. Being “social” media, the one unifying factor of all these platforms is the ability to facilitate conversation. And though digital communication does not inherently create a community, social media sites do strengthen existing communities through their openness, accessibility and willingness to interact with community members on their time. People want to interact online with those who are a part of their everyday lives.

The established nature of the Jewish community is an advantage here. Congregants will not feel threatened by the notion of interacting with people they already know and see on a regular basis. And potential congregants who have not yet made a decision about joining a congregation will welcome the opportunity to read more online about their potential Jewish home. As Americans spend 22.7% of their time on the Internet interacting through social networks, it’s clear that people are truly living segments of their lives online. It has always been a goal of synagogues to be a hub of Jewish life and a resource wherever they live. Now these efforts must go digital.

What follows is a brief breakdown of the most popular and prominent social media platforms today. These are the tools with which you will need to reach out and fully engage your congregants. It’s important to remember that starting out in social media is not about creating radically new initiatives. Rather, it’s about finding your community’s voice and running with it.

**Blogs:** Blogs (short for “Web logs”) have been popular since the late ‘90s. Blogs consist of regular textual posts, usually on a certain topic and geared toward a certain audience. People can subscribe to blog postings via e-mail. Successful bloggers make a point of posting regularly and interacting with their readers through the “comments” section of each post. Another important aspect of community blogging is providing multiple voices for your audiences to engage with.

**Facebook:** Facebook is one of the most popular social networking sites on the Web. The entire site is built on the idea of connecting with friends, family members and colleagues through a network of interrelated profiles. Users build a profile accessible to their friends by “liking” pages dedicated to their favorite brands and organizations. Users can share pictures, video, notes and status updates to keep their friends in the know. Users can also post links to outside content and RSVP to events. Finally, users can interact with one another through both public and private messaging.

**Flickr:** Flickr is a photo-sharing platform. Users can upload their photographs and share them digitally.

**Foursquare:** Foursquare is a location-based platform. Users can “check in” to locations on their mobile devices. The platform then displays where and when a user’s friends have checked in. Certain locations and businesses also offer deals for those who check in on Foursquare, like discounted goods or services. Users also earn badges for checking into specific locations, which allows them to display where they’ve been in a visual way.

**Google+:** A recent addition to the world of social media, Google+ integrates with someone’s Gmail account. Users can create a profile, post content they find interesting, videoconference with multiple users and seek out other users to interact with. Google+ also encourages one to put others in specific groups to help track posts from different communities. Google+’s “+1” button helps users flag and share content for their friends to read, watch or listen to.

**LinkedIn:** LinkedIn is a professional social network that helps users connect with past, present and potential employers and colleagues. LinkedIn allows networking to occur between people with similar backgrounds, areas of expertise and experiences. The platform takes the entire process of searching for and applying for jobs online.

**Tumblr:** Tumblr is a content-sharing platform. Users create a page onto which they can post photos, text, quotations, videos, songs and links to other websites. From their, other users can view and reblog this content, creating an interwoven network of content generators and sharers.

**Twitter:** Twitter is a micro-blogging platform. Users post 140-character messages (called “tweets”), and can “follow” other users to view their posts in an automatically updating stream. Many Twitter users access the platform from their...
mobile phones, allowing them to update followers on their whereabouts and activities. Twitter users can also write to one another direct messages, allowing them to share information privately. The greatest strength of Twitter is its ability to conduct an open conversation. Because many followers allow anyone to follow them, most people can view whatever anyone else has to say. Twitter is a wonderful tool for mass communication and sharing news and information with your audience very quickly. By “retweeting” someone else’s post, users can share tweets with people who might not follow everyone that they do, thus amplifying the message.

YouTube: YouTube is a hub for online video. Users can upload and share their videos openly with all other users as well as comment on whatever videos they watch. People can also subscribe to YouTube channels, allowing them to track new videos from any given user. Many YouTube users also create “vlogs,” which are the video version of a blog. Essentially, vlogs are serial videos featuring the same people or content.

CHECKLIST – IS YOUR COMPANY READY FOR SOCIAL MEDIA?

Don’t jump into social media just because everyone else is doing it. Here’s a checklist designed to help you determine if your organization is ready and, if so, how to make your efforts successful.

- My company has clear goals for social media. Be as specific as you can (e.g. increase lead conversion rates, increase the number of qualified leads, build awareness measured by online traffic, decrease the time needed to resolve customer service issues, etc.) and keep these objectives in mind for every initiative you execute.

- We have the human resources to commit to social media. Before you start a corporate blog or Twitter account, ask yourself if you can allocate the resources needed. Social media is about real-time response and continuously updated information – both of which require commitment and dedication.

- We produce enough quality content to sustain social media conversations. Content feeds the social media beast. Audit your existing marketing assets and identify the educational pieces – these perform much better in social media than traditional sales collateral.

- We know which social media sites are popular with our prospects and customers. Do your research and focus your energy and investments where your audiences are.

- Our company website is prepared for social media attention. Before you set up multiple social media profiles and pages, make sure your own website is in good enough shape to handle the attention (i.e. you’re proud of the way it looks and works). And be sure you have a plan in place to market to the leads generated.

- We’re ready to incorporate social media strategies throughout the buying process. Social media is not just for the top of the demand generation funnel. It’s important to monitor and track your prospects and customers throughout the revenue cycle.

Courtesy of Marketo, Inc. © 2010
Social Media is Not About Technology

Lisa Colton, Founder and President, Darim Online

Read that headline again. It’s true, think about it. You’ve never said that talking with your daughter is “about your larynx,” or that having a conversation with an old friend is “about the telephone.” You’d say it was about the content of the conversation, or about the social value of that conversation and its impact on your relationship.

So, too, with social media. While the tools are new and the social norms may feel awkward at first, this is really about relationships and community building. And in an area where we’re trying to strengthen relationships between and amongst members and with the community as a whole, this modality of connection we commonly refer to as “social media” is a huge blessing.

In this article I’ll examine the shifts taking place in society and their implications for synagogue management and communication, to help you understand why social media is such a valuable asset in our communications toolbox.

Today’s Landscape
First of all, let’s acknowledge that today we are working in an attention economy. This is as true for you and me as it is for the members and prospects we are trying to reach. Now that everyone is both a producer and consumer of media, we are all working hard to filter out the noise so that we can allocate our attention to the content that is most valuable: it helps us lead happier, more efficient, satisfying and successful lives. Social media has both exacerbated this, and also has helped us to be successful, given that this is today’s reality.

In the old paradigm of communications, our messages were a “one-size-fits-all” variety, and they were broadcast in one direction to large numbers of people. Let’s call this the “hub and spokes” model. For example, the synagogue as the institution sits in the center, sending information (and solicitations) out. When the institution is the “center of the universe,” I’m less likely to give my attention. We are all selfish consumers (rightly so), and we all believe that we should be the center of our own universe!

In the new paradigm, messages are tailored to your audience, to provide the greatest relevance and value in order to earn people’s attention. The individuals, families and communities are the center, and the institution is there to support them. Isn’t this the origin of a synagogue in the first place? When the institution is helping me clarify my goals and helping me achieve them – well, that’s worth paying for. Sign me up!

This cultural shift is an important background to consider as we move into using social media tools. The technology isn’t a free bullhorn to promote your events and ask for contributions. That’s just using the new tools in the old way, and is absolutely not the way to build trust, strengthen relationships and earn attention.

Getting Heard
Don’t worry about talking. Start by listening. There is no better way to begin your successful social media endeavors than by making a habit of listening. Go back to your face-to-face conversation with your daughter, or telephone chat with an old friend. These relationships are successful because they balance both talking and listening.

Before social media, it was hard (and costly) to listen. In that hub and spokes model, it required listening to members one-by-one by one. It simply was not feasible to listen as much as necessary to achieve our relationship building goals. Today, in just a few minutes of scanning Facebook posts or tweets you can get the pulse of your community, do the ‘small talk’ online, and connect with a dozen individuals in a meaningful, relevant and personal way. Put your ear to the ground and listen to the community.

Once you’re listening, then start asking questions, so you can listen some more! Rabbi Arnie Samlan asks a weekly Friday question on Facebook, “What did we learn this week?” which generates dozens of deep, thoughtful, reflective and hilarious replies (read more about it here). Some congregations and schools ask very practical questions that are relevant to families, making the synagogue Facebook page a platform for communal knowledge sharing – such as, “What’s your best tip to keep kids engaged at a Passover Seder?,” or “How do you talk to you kids about forgiveness at Yom Kippur?” You might even consider asking questions that could influence your strategy and programs, such as “How do you want to grow Jewishly this year?”
Break Down The Walls And Throw Away The Clock
In many congregations, the opportunities to engage with the synagogue, the staff and the community are limited to business hours, and specific events in the building. But our Jewish lives, needs and curiosities work on a 24/7 clock – at home, in the car and at work. Social media tools can help congregations become as open as Abraham and his “open tent,” providing incredible value with great efficiency by throwing away the assumptions that your opportunities to engage current and prospective members are limited to business hours in your building.

Many businesses – AT&T, Comcast, Dell Computer, BestBuy and many others – are servicing a significant amount of their customer service support requests through Twitter. Interestingly for those who would have called a support line by phone, the Twitter representatives are able to solve problems quicker and easier than a phone bank. But the bonus is that they are able to strengthen relationships with many people who never would have called the support line in the first place.

In congregations where we are trying to build community – in numbers, commitment and participation – finding additional points of connection more often is critical. Limiting those to business hours and the telephone and in person appointments or events is creating our own glass ceiling. It’s time to smash it.

Rabbi Jonathan Blake at Westchester Reform Synagogue uses a simple service called Formspring to make himself and his Rabbinic wisdom more accessible to more people more often. At http://www.formspring.me/rabbiblake he receives questions ranging from, “What’s your favorite flavor of ice cream,” to “How do you define ‘forgiveness’?,” or “What do you think about Israel’s handling of the flotilla situation?” This simple tool allows Rabbi Blake to be in dialogue with his community on a continual basis. The fact that it’s open (questions are posted anonymously, but anyone can read the questions and answers) allows every minute of his time to be of value beyond the single question asker, and allows many more people to learn things about Judaism and Rabbi Blake that they might not have otherwise known. This window into this congregational community may in fact be the reason people stay members, or become members of this synagogue.

Inside Out And Outside In
One of the few age generalizations (and it’s just that – a generalization, not a truth!) that I ever make is that older people tend to default to private communications unless there is a specific reason for them to be public. And conversely, younger people tend to make all communications public unless there is a reason to keep it private. If we are in the business of building relationships and community, we need to be social. So think of your open socializing as your open tent, as being “warm and welcoming.”

The most obvious way to feel welcome is to connect with real people. Your staff and board members are an important asset, but your followers and fans may be even more powerful in helping you extend your reach, build your brand, and get people in the door. Walking in the door ‘cold’ is hard, but it feels totally different when a friend from my mom’s group invites me to the tot Rosh Hashanah services, or raves about the synagogue early childhood center on Facebook. This holiday season, I’ve seen many invitations from young adults, singles, families and empty nesters saying, “I’m going to Congregation ABC for services. They offer free tickets for High Holiday services – anyone want to come?” How much more powerful is it to receive that invitation from a friend, rather than a newspaper ad? Listen carefully to find those members who are active and trusted and have strong online networks. Encourage your members to share their experiences online and to invite their friends into your congregation. Networks are powerful. Use them.

Many synagogue cultures are still based on a society from decades ago. Synagogue membership was a norm and a value throughout the community. Generations of families often lived close to one another, and families lived in the same area for years, thus having a “life-long” relationship with a congregation. Today, essentially none of these factors can be assumed, and many new factors (demographics, technology, etc.) are further changing the landscape in which we work. In this environment, only one thing is really true: more of the same isn’t going to work. We can’t assume that outsiders will find us, let alone walk in the door, if the sides of our tent are closed.

Let’s open the tent.
Facebook, Twitter, Blogs, YouTube, Google+. The world of communication is changing. Not only is it changing, but by the time you feel comfortable understanding how it works, it changes again. How do we discuss best practices in an environment that changes daily and leaves you in a place where you feel you have no control?

Temple Israel Memphis has incorporated the use of social media as part of its communication plan. The vision for our communication plan was to be “Effective Efficient and Excellent.” The use of social media has truly added a new dimension to how we engage our membership. Following are some of the “Best Practices” that we have leaned through our social media experience:

Find someone who knows what they are talking about. I do not pretend to know it all, and enlist the use of three gurus. Throughout this article, you will see their comments and thoughts. These contributors include Isti Bardos - Temple Israel Communications Director, Rabbi Adam Grossman - Associate Rabbi, and Dave Barger of Luna Web Inc.

One of the first questions that will come up is: “Why should our synagogue use social media?” There has to be a better answer than “Everybody else is doing it.”

Have a Purpose and Establish Goals for Using Social Media.
Communicating – We want to be effective, efficient and excellent in the way we communicate with our membership. Social media is also very budget-friendly.

Connecting - We want to get our members connected, and social media creates a two-way conversation. You are now in a position to LISTEN to feedback generated through your social media conversations. Our Temple newsletter is awesome, but only lets us tell our story.

Involving- Social media takes an active approach and can prompt your members to do something NOW!

Commitment to Resources.
Staff time and training is an important component to a successful program, as is being committed to research and knowing what’s new. Remember things change rapidly. Not that you need to be the first one on the ship, but you want to be informed. You will need to train your members as well.

I remember the staff conversation when Isti showed us his first Quick Response Code (QR). Most were not in favor of that form of communicating. “All of our members do not have smartphones,” I heard from some of our staff members. We used our newsletter and website to help train everyone, and QR’s are now an integral part of our plan.

Have an Awesome Website.
Everything in social media leads back to your website. If you decide to use Facebook, Twitter, YouTube or other social media platforms, they will connect from your website. This is where you can show off everything you do. Remember that videos give you the capability to bring stories to life.

Assign Responsibility and Accountability.
Somebody has to be the go-to person and be the one that creates the checks and balances. This individual spends time learning the new techniques and determining how to be more efficient and effective. Along with listening to members, evaluating responses and their origin is also important.
Using Facebook, the King of Social Media

Isti Bardos, Communications Director, Temple Israel, Memphis, TN

“Social Media represents the largest shift in communications in human history.”
-- Mike Lewis, VP of Marketing and Sales, Awareness Inc.

Now that’s a bold statement. “Social Media represents the largest shift in communications in human history.” If that’s truly the case, we better know what we’re talking about so we’re all on the same page.

If you don’t know what “social media” is, don’t feel bad. It was just added to the dictionary in August of 2011. That new dictionary entrée defines social media as “forms of electronic communication (as Web sites for social networking and microblogging) through which users create online communities to share information, ideas, personal messages and other content (as videos).”

While we now know that social media is quite important, and we know its definition, it would serve us well to look at it from a perspective articulated by Jeffry L. Cohen, Social Media Marketing Manager at Howard, Merrell & Partners. He said, “Social media is not a tool or technology. It’s a real-time approach to communications and engagement.”

Please notice the “E” word: engagement. Engagement is the buzz word behind the “social media” buzz. Engagement is really what it is all about.

As Charlene Li, co-author of Groundswell, said, “Twitter is not a technology. It’s a conversation. And it’s happening with or without you.” Broadening that to include Facebook is certainly appropriate and applicable.

In one ten-word sentence, Katie Delahaye Paine, CEO of KDPaine & Partners, a PR and social media research company, lays it all out: “Social media is still about people. It’s about having conversations.”

The bottom line is this: It is in your synagogue’s best interests to be a part of the conversation that your members and potential members are having, so that they can ultimately be more engaged with synagogue life.

In this evolving, lightning-fast realm of social media, there are examples of what has been effective, and there are some basic, common-sense truths and tips.

If there are many social media platforms, where does one begin? As Paine so succinctly suggests, “Fish where the fish are.” And with 800 million users and growing, Facebook unquestionably is the place to begin. After you conquer Facebook, you can then explore the tactical use of Twitter, YouTube and/or Vimeo, and the use of QR codes. But in this article, the focus is on Facebook.

Start a Facebook page for your synagogue.
Before launching their Facebook page in July of 2009, Temple Israel in Memphis did not tread lightly into the Facebook foray. A detailed S.W.O.T. analysis was completed, and after looking at the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats, it became crystal clear that the pros far outweighed any perceived or real cons. Facebook is where a great number of people are having their conversations and sharing their lives with friends and families. Many synagogues claim to be “warm and welcoming” and “an extended family.” If that’s the case, then it follows that synagogues take advantage of the opportunity to show that in a platform built just for that!

Have more than one administrator of your Facebook page.
If there is only one administrator and that person is, for whatever reason, not there or able to take care of the site, then your synagogue would be in quite a bind.

Set your synagogue’s Facebook page setting such that even those who don’t have Facebook accounts can at least view the page.
Doing this completely removes the barrier for those who don’t have a Facebook account to at least be aware of what’s going on. While it’s true that they would not be able to post a comment or “like” an item, non-Facebook users will have the opportunity to be included.

Frequently post interesting items.
Remember, having a Facebook page is about joining the conversation and engaging with members and potential members. You have to hold up your end of the conversation. Having said that, Paine makes an important point about what to post: “Interesting content is king.” So, it’s not enough to post for the sake of posting. It’s much more valuable to post interesting items. And whatever you do, take the advice that Larry Weber, author of Marketing to the Social Web, suggests “…people don’t want to be
sold. What people want is news and information about the things they care about.”

**Post pictures.**
People like to see photos of themselves and people they know. That’s why Facebook includes a mechanism to share them. They call it “tagging.” Simply put, it gives you the opportunity to bring more people into the conversation. Also, keep the caption interesting and as brief as possible. Note: even if you post pictures of minors, do not identify them either in the caption or by tagging them.

**Post videos.**
While it’s important to post videos, keep the length brief whenever possible. The truism that “there is too much of a good thing” holds here. The exception to brief (under 45 seconds) videos is posting sermons from Shabbat services.

**Reply to people’s comments.**
Having a conversation in real life is a two-way street: someone speaks, and then the other person speaks or, at the very least, reacts. So, when some posts a comment on your synagogue’s Facebook page, a reply is suggested. It’s common courtesy in face-to-face conversations, and it is common courtesy for online conversations.

**Monitor the comments.**
This comes naturally if you are indeed posting items frequently. Plus, Facebook does have mechanisms to notify you when people engage on your site, so there’s no excuse not to be aware.

This is only the beginning of how the ever-changing field of social media is impacting communications. We will continue to strive to be effective, efficient and excellent communicators. Synagogue leadership and managers will be looking for new and creative ways to get their messages out and engage their members. Keep up the great work each of you do.
Connect to Your Members and the World Through Social Media, but Understand the Risks

Jeffrey Berkett - CIC, MBA, CWCA

When you think of social media, do you only consider Facebook, Twitter and e-mail, to connect with members or to grow your congregation? Are you familiar with terms like ‘clickable links,’ ‘malware,’ ‘unauthorized control,’ ‘copyright infringement,’ ‘libel,’ ‘slander’ or the dozens of other terms that can turn these new and powerful tools into an embarrassing, costly, legal problem for your congregation?

In the last few years, it has become commonplace for temples to use the Internet in a variety of ways to reach members. Most temples will likely have their own website, a Facebook and/or Twitter page, an Internet-connected computer network at one or more temple locations, and an electronic payment processing system for gift shop items, donations or other payments. Even if handled by third-party firms on a click through basis, there are liabilities to consider. In addition, employees, volunteers, or board members may own laptops that contain member information or other confidential information. While these are all useful business tools, they also may leave a temple exposed to risk that is not covered under a standard commercial liability insurance policy. Typical general liability policies often do not cover activities associated with website publishing or network security. Coverage for social media incidents can be limited, requiring special coverage.

The Risks
Many of the same types of insurance claims that occur using social media have been around even before computers were in existence; such as libel, slander, copyright infringement, bullying and harassment (of employees and/or members). However, today’s social media environment makes these types of situations more public, wider in scope and more damaging to the people involved. The cost of fixing the problem must be considered.

Common social media (cyber) risk exposures include, but are not limited to:

- Data/security breach of the private information of your members.
- Libel or slander in postings on your website, or tweets to members that contain confidential information you didn’t mean to make public. For example, one school tweeted the names of students and their injuries from the prior week’s football game, and was sued by a student’s parents.
- Copyright or trademark infringement – how many temples have used a parody of Indiana Jones or an avatar for a fundraising theme?
- Data destruction and/or corruption as a result of a virus. This could be caused by a hacker, a disgruntled or an innocent employee surfing the web.
- Cyber bullying. Schools have been held liable for online bullying of students, even though the bullying did not occur on the school’s website.
- Hackers, worms and other cyber meddlers.
- Firewall and network security attacks.

Social media makes instant communication easy – but it is also universal and public. Once it is out there, an errant comment cannot be taken back. A breached computer system exposing sensitive information can bring your temple embarrassment, undue expense or, worse, legal action.

Prevention
While insurance is available to help mitigate the effects of a loss and can provide funds to reimburse you, prevention is the first step to making sure a claim doesn’t occur in the first place.

Problems with social media can be broken down into deliberate attacks (hackers), or innocent errors (“Oops – I punched the wrong key,” or “I went on a web site and…”). The old saying, “An ounce of protection is worth a pound of cure,” really applies here. Once the genie is out of the bottle, it is hard (expensive) to put it back in.

Start by examining your computer and cyber infrastructure.

Arrange to have an independent IT company perform a security audit to determine how secure your system is. They can give you an independent opinion. We had one client use the same IT provider for years, only to find out after an independent security review that they had no virus protection and no fire walls. At the very least, have your IT consultant review both your hardware and software security. Work with them to establish and maintain a
security protocol. Establish internal protocols for employee use of social media and the Internet.

In the early days of the Internet, it was recommended that companies have an Internet use policy. As the use of the Internet has grown, companies need to have a plan in place, [and enforce] an internal Internet and social networking acceptable use policy.

Who is responsible for posting information on your sites? Have they received clearance to use the material they post? One organization posted a phrase from a popular book and was contacted (legally) from the author about its unauthorized use.

Make sure your computer system is physically secure and that you have a working backup protocol. When was the last time you made sure your backup could actually retrieve your data?

Do employees know which social media or other websites that they are authorized to access? Accidentally clicking on a wrong link or download can invite unauthorized users into your cyber world.

Are your systems secure? One of our clients has one of the most secure systems you can imagine, except it was discovered that the owner’s phone links directly to the system and that this phone was not password protected.

What do you do if something does go wrong? Develop an emergency response plan. Who do you call? What steps do you have to notify others that information has been lost or compromised? Put the plan in writing. Make sure it is accessible off line by people authorized to respond. Contact your insurance representative.

Many temples have been using third party vendors for their online gift shop and members click through to this third party site. How secure is that site? Can you be held liable if that vendor’s system is compromised (could you be named in the lawsuit)? Does this vendor have enough insurance to protect you? Does the vendor’s system contain not only your data, but the information of all the other temples they work with? Does the vendor have enough insurance to take care of all of you?

It is important to consider these questions and to have the right security and policies in place to protect your organization.

The costs of exposure
The cost of cyber liability losses can add up quickly. For example, according to a widely cited 2009 Ponemon Institute Study, the average business loss from a lost laptop is $49,276, and most of that expense is associated with the cost of a data breach. Privacy laws require specific notification requirements to people affected by the data breach. According to their 2011 study, data breach incidents cost U.S. companies $204 per compromised customer record in 2009, compared to $202 in 2008. Multiply that by your number of members and employees and the cost of notification can easily climb beyond $50,000 to $100,000 or more.

Every temple that uses social media, keeps electronic data, or uses the Internet to conduct e-commerce or general business operations has exposure. As with other exposures insurance can help minimize the financial loss after a claim occurs. This can be in the form of direct payment or reimbursement. Cyber insurance can also help in mitigating the damage to your temple’s reputation in the event negative publicity results from a social media or e-commerce incident. Many cyber insurance policies come with risk management websites and/or consultants that can help with risk control, and education for you and your staff or board before a loss happens. The most comprehensive cyber insurance policies will provide coverage for public relations expenses related to protecting or restoring the reputation of the business.

Using social media doesn’t have to be scary if you have the right procedures and policies in place to protect your organization.

Jeffrey Berkett is an insurance representative with the Berkett Agency. If you would like a sample “Social Networking Acceptable Use Policy” contact Jeff at Jberkett@berkettinsurance.com or (800) BERKETT.
NATA’S MISSION STATEMENT

The National Association for Temple Administration (NATA) is an active professional network of Reform Jewish Synagogue Executive Directors committed to Judaic principles of ethics and integrity.

NATA’s mission is to support its members by:

· providing educational and training activities and standards,
· providing its individual members and their URJ congregations with access to NATA resources,
· advocating for and promoting the profession of Temple Administration,
· serving as the professional partner with the Union for Reform Judaism.

NATA PLACEMENT

The NATA Placement Committee is responsible for supporting the process by which URJ congregations (and a few Conservative congregations and Jewish organizations) search for an Executive Director or other top-level administrative professionals. The placement service also assists individuals looking for employment by providing them with information about available positions. Committee members, all of whom are Executive Directors working in congregations, work with congregations interested in hiring an Executive Director. In addition to posting the position on the NATA website, this includes discussing job descriptions, salary and benefits packages, what the Executive Director can do for the congregation and what his or her role could be. NATA’s website already includes sample job descriptions (http://natanet.org) and the new how-to-manual, “A Guide for Congregations Going into Placement for a New Executive Director,” for congregations beginning the search process. We do not match colleagues to positions. Committee members are Ruth W. Cohen, Betti Greenstein, Saralouise Reis, Beth Silver, Michael Liepman and Janice Rosenblatt, FTA. Kathy Small, NATA’s Association Manager, provides ongoing support to the congregations, individuals seeking positions and to the committee.
THE NATA NATIONAL OFFICE

The NATA National Office is headquartered in Ridgefield, Washington, adjacent to the Columbia River and about 15 minutes north of Portland, Oregon. The office is managed by Kathy Small of Small and Associates, which prides itself on providing top-quality customer service to the NATA membership. The national office provides the day-to-day administration of membership, convention, education and placement services, as well as support to the NATA Executive Team and Board of Directors. Kathy Small has been managing the NATA office since 1988.

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