

FIRST EDITION

JEWISH COMMUNAL LEADERSHIP AND CONGREGATIONAL GOVERNANCE

A Resource Manual for
Training and Developing
Effective Boards and Committees



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Introduction: Board Training Manual

Why a board manual?

Most people join synagogues not in order to serve on their boards, but instead to find a spiritual home, educate themselves and their families, and/or participate in Jewish community. Through pursuing these activities, however, people may deepen their commitment and contribution to their congregations through leadership roles.

It is the holy work of the board to keep aloft the vision of a sacred community. Certainly, board members are responsible for policy, planning, financial resources, senior staff supervision, and programming based on the congregation's mission. However, serving on the board is also an important opportunity to receive; serving on the board should provide opportunities for spiritual growth and leadership training.

Participation in synagogue life does not by definition guarantee the skills and knowledge necessary to be an effective board member. Even those with backgrounds in organizational development, management, financial oversight or administration may not be able to easily adapt those skills to the synagogue arena. Additionally, as sociologists are quick to tell us, the effectiveness of any group, such as a board, depends not only on the effectiveness of each individual, but also upon the effectiveness of the system, the patterns of interaction, the cooperative abilities and understandings of roles of the entire group.

Hence, all new boards, even those made up of individuals who have previously served in congregational leadership, need training and orientation to effectively do their work. **All boards are new each time they are elected—even if only one member changes.** Having resources, tools, and insights from Jewish life and the world-at-large can help in developing and maintaining effective leadership across the congregational system.

How do I use this manual?

The goal of this manual is to assist congregations or Havurot in times of transition and in on-going governance. We recognize that there are many directions one can take in training a board, and as such have offered a few pathways.

The *Guide* is divided into three parts. The first contains traditional text study and congregational systems and leadership theory. The second is based on the *Tachlis* (practical) experience of other congregations, and includes examples of congregational documents on subjects ranging from governance to committee-building.

Last, we go to “day of” suggestions—what do board trainings look like? How does one part of the day flow into the next? You will find actual synagogue board training agendas and a few, suggested, more detailed, day-long or half-day long agendas, which we hope will be helpful as your congregation plans its next board training. These agendas may be used in full, or different parts of the plans may be used at different times and as your congregation’s specific needs develop.

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