

Conference Call • Thursday, June 23, 2005

Topic: Sulam/Jewish Communal Professionals of Chicago: Good Business Manual Presentation

Discussion of the new manual titled: “GOOD BUSINESS”, A Best Practices Guide to Retaining and Advancing Women in Jewish Communal Service, focusing on Achieving Work-Life Balance and Shattering the Glass Ceiling. The guest speaker for the conference call was Leah Silberman Bernstein, past co-chair of the Jewish Communal Professionals of Chicago, who oversaw the development of the manual.

The conference summary notes are provided; however, for a richer understanding of the manual and its ideas, please download a copy from www.jcsana.org

★Speaker Bio:

Leah Silberman Bernstein is a Jewish Communal Professional with over 10 years of professional and volunteer experience in New York City, St. Louis and Chicago. She holds an MSSW from Columbia University in New York and an MA in Jewish Studies from the Jewish Theological Seminary in New York. She is currently serving as Religious School Director for Congregation B’nai Amoona in St. Louis, and served for the last two years as Co-Chair of the Jewish Communal Professionals of Chicago where she helped create, implement and oversee the vision for SULAM (A Career Ladder for Women in Jewish Communal Service)

★Call Notes:

The call’s focus is on the new Best Practices guide just completed by JCPC (Jewish Communal Professionals of Chicago), a local group of the Jewish Communal Service Association (JCSA).

A few years ago JCSA sponsored a national tele-conference call on the subject of “Shattering the glass ceiling.” JCPC hosted the local programming in Chicago and, following the tele-conference, wrote a grant to the Jewish Women’s Foundation of Chicago to fund the efforts of the grassroots work toward the creation of SULAM, a project to address the advancement of women in the field of Jewish communal service. “Sulam” is the Hebrew word for “ladder.”

There are three main foci to Sulam:

- 1) Creation of best practices manual in order to present the case to the community along with examples from both the for-profit and not-for-profit sectors of ways to achieve Work-Life Balance and to Shatter the Glass Ceiling. The manual's purpose is to serve as a catalyst for...
- 2) Working with the executive suite of top executives and top lay leaders to promote this kind of progressive growth in the field of Jewish Communal Service, while educating and empowering the professional base in JCS.
- 3) The third listed in the manual is to increase level of skill among our colleagues which is also a main goal of JCPC.

Sulam has been a controversial effort.

- Decreased Executive Support: As JCPC Executive Committee members, many of us had been actively supported by our executives in the sense that they allowed us to attend meetings and programs as part of work time and many even offered in-kind support for mailings, copies, etc. Once Sulam was funded by the Jewish Women's Foundation, some JCPC/Sulam members began to experience a less supportive environment in the work place: we were hassled about meetings and programs that were previously ok.
- Difficulty recruiting leadership: Insofar as reaching out for mentors, advisory committee members, etc., many were reluctant to help and/or sign-on and lend their name to our efforts. Reasons given mainly consisted of "conflict of interests".
- Now that we were recognized by the Chicago Jewish Women's Foundation and offered financial backing, we were seen as competition.

This call was designed to address the second and main goal of Sulam's original work – presenting the manual to educate and empower our colleagues. Please take time now to read the ***Executive Summary*** if you have not already. There are some key statistics and top professionals who have summarized the failures of leadership in advancing women in Jewish Communal Service. See page 1.

Discussion Questions:

Question #1 For thought: What are the challenges (for women) of working in or re-entering the workforce when you have children?

Question #2: What keeps you from effectively (creatively) combining family and career goals? (responses by conference call participants):

- Lack of role models (in family); limited ideas from those who have worked before
- As a full time worker, there are no role models of the type I aspire to be. There are limited women who model balancing both part time work and home life.
- I am currently in the process of changing jobs from a 4day a week position to something new. I had to field the never-ending comments about the 'mommy-track' and was made to feel like I was not totally 'part of the team' by being there only 4 days during the week. It was the work environment that is leading me to change my job.
- Affordable childcare within the Jewish community?
- Evening hours at work is always expected
- How can I continue to balance being home with my children and affording Jewish education?

Resources

There are resources that enable us to become more creative with our employment efforts.

There are more and more resources out there to help us meet our own needs regarding work:

- 1) *Working Mother* magazine each year outlines specific programs in the top 100 corporations in the US.
- 2) *Advancing Women Professionals* – founded by Shifra Bronznick. Shifra and her associates (Audra Berg and Didi Goldenhar) were instrumental to our work with their guidance and editorial work on this manual.
- 3) There are many resources listed in the bibliography sections at the end of the manual.

There are many types of changes and agents of change presented in this manual.

Some are concrete, practical and some are methodological and strategic approaches. We will review some of each kind of approach relating to Achieving Work-Life Balance and to Shattering the Glass Ceiling.

Work-Life Balance

- 1) Top Management's Commitment
- 2) Flexible Work Arrangements
- 3) Leave Policies and Benefits
- 4) Dependent Care Benefits
- 5) Support Services for Employees

Shattering the Glass Ceiling

- 1) Top Management acknowledgement that the glass ceiling exists
- 2) Education and Awareness Building
- 3) Programs Designed to Build Women's Skills
- 4) Policies, Practices and Accountability

Strategy for change:

This whole arena can seem huge and overwhelming, and it is. There is an approach that attempts to partialize steps. The “Small-Wins” strategy for change is defined as:

“ Incremental changes aimed at biases so entrenched in the system that they’re not even noticed until they are gone...a powerful way of chipping away the barriers that hold women back without sparking the kind of sound and fury that scares people into resistance.”
(Meyerson and Fletcher, 2000)

Strategic Steps:

Much of change needs to happen from the top down. We must continue to affect change by bringing it to discussion with lay leaders, with staff. We have the power and responsibility to move it forward.

Another set of strategic steps consisting of recommendations addressing a first phase of work can be found in the manual. See page 31 for recommendations for implementing Best Practices within the first year.

Question #3: How many times have you crossed paths with an executive who desired to bring you ‘on to their team of professionals’ but because you weren’t willing to work full time they totally dismissed you?

This question is directed toward our community’s top executive professionals who need to think about the issues raised in the manual. A conference call will be held in the coming months with a national network of executives and human resource professionals within the Jewish community to address topics raised in the manual.

Question #4 :What are your ideas to promote activism in your community?

- Survey local professionals ? Enable local groups of JCSA to advocate
- Attempt to try one example within an organization IE: job sharing; compressed work week

- Advancing Women Professionals are in the process of developing tools; a tool book for change. Currently working on “needs assessment” for internal exploration to help younger groups use and empower people in the field.

Next Steps:

The manual references several examples of ways that women can be successful (in advancement and work-life balance). Use the manual as leverage and examples of ways it has worked.

The project and the manual is the result of collaboration and cooperation the part of MANY dedicated people. In order to realize the ‘dream’ the dedication of many, many more people is needed.

Please join us in realizing this dream.

-Jewish Communal Professionals of Chicago / Sulam Project Steering
Committee and Advisory Committee