

Recommendations for Bridging the Generational Divide in Jewish Communal Work Settings

As Jewish communal professionals, we are all working toward the same goal of creating a more vibrant and engaged Jewish community. Ultimately, we want the same end result, but those of us from different generations may have very different ideas about how to get there. In order to work more effectively together, we need to understand each other's perspectives and motivations. Initially, conflict may arise as one professional's actions may appear to run counter to another's actions. However, if we explain ourselves and focus on our shared goals, we may find that we are much closer to one another than appears at the outset.

In these tough economic times, it is more critical than ever that we come together and work with one another to meet as many community needs with as few resources as possible. We should foster cooperation both within our own institutions and across institutions throughout the Jewish community. Here are six ways to help us achieve these goals:

- 1. Create realistic expectations of one another**
- 2. Open lines of communication: Supervisors and Newer Professionals need to communicate clearly, directly, and frequently with each other**
 - Communicate expectations — don't assume there is an awareness of cultural norms and workplace behavior.
 - Explain the contextual rationale and how the supervisor's experience informs her behavior; doing so makes the supervisor's behavior seem useful and purposeful rather than hierarchical and bureaucratic. Millennials want to understand the rationale behind workplace behavior.
 - State and explain norms—less room for misunderstandings.
 - Articulate explicit goals and vision, emphasizing the meaning in the work we are doing.
 - Explain the big picture and the broader effect of your organization's work.
 - Provide honest and constructive feedback.
- 3. Collaboration — different perspectives yield more creative problem solving and more useful end products**
 - Acknowledge what each professional brings to the table—everyone has something to contribute.
 - Work on building respectful relationships.
 - Find a common ground from which to work.
 - Seasoned professionals need to be open to eliminating bureaucracy when possible and practices that no longer work or are not relevant.
 - Millennials need to adapt to norms without compromising their values.
- 4. Flexibility — make accommodations in the workplace**
- 5. Mentoring**
- 6. Provide on-going learning opportunities**