

The Advantage

A Publication of the FJMC for Men's Club Presidents

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A Dozen Steps to Building a Better Men's Club

Among the most frequent complaints of Men's Clubs is that they want to attract more members to the club and get greater attendance at their activities. And the vast majority of clubs want to skew their numbers to younger men.

This is actually not as difficult as you would think, but most clubs go about it in entirely the wrong way. They think that if they simply have the same programs but publicize them more, they will get more attendees. Or they think that, if they throw in a single sports program, suddenly younger men will join the Men's Club in droves. If only it were that simple.

What it really takes is a revolutionary new outlook on what the Men's Club stands for. If your club isn't attracting the numbers you'd like, it's rather obvious that the men in your congregation are rejecting what your club does. You need to make a clean break with the past and make a public relations blitz to rebuild your reputation

♦**STEP 1.** Change your Men's Club's name. If there is a lot of negativity attached to your Men's Club, its worth considering changing its name. If you are currently the Such-and-Such Men's Club and

you're having trouble attracting men, they could very well be rejecting you because of the past weakness of the club going back several years. To signify a clean break with the past, why not change your name and call yourselves a Brotherhood? One Men's Club calls itself the Mitzvah Men's Club. These might be more attractive titles, especially to younger men.

♦**STEP 2.** Abandon your typical programs. Be willing to abandon every one of your programs from the past. You can't put a new face on yourself and still carry over the sad programming that has been your trademark. The two exceptions to this are in the areas of community service and fund raising. If you have particularly successful activities in these areas that you or your synagogue depends on, those you are allowed to retain. But you should review them as well to see if there are ways you can jazz them up.

.....A Dozen Steps cont'd on page 2

☛**The FJMC is looking for a few good clubs, who are willing to explore brave, new worlds.... more details inside, at page 4.**

YOU CAN BE A ☛ WINNER! ☛

The Advantage wants to hear from you about an issue or concern which you or your club is facing. As you know, the FJMC Advantage, in the Ask Allan (formerly Ask Mark) section, provides advice about problems which you and your club may be having, and suggests solutions. Well, we want to hear from more of you! While preparing each issue, the Editor (that means me) will review the questions received, and the best one (or two) will receive, ABSOLUTELY FREE, a postage-paid copy of one of the FJMC Books.

Here's an opportunity to add to your club's library, and gain wonderful programming ideas from the book you choose, to help strengthen your club. Questions can be submitted by regular mail to: Allan Kahan, Editor, FJMC Advantage, 1916 Alabaster Drive, Silver Spring, MD 20904-5303, or by email, FJMCAdvantage@fjmc.org.

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... A Dozen Steps (cont'd)

♦**STEP 3.** Start now. There's no time like the present to start planning for the 2009-2010 year. You'll need several months to do it right. Finish up your program schedule for this year, but your attention really has to focus on your "rebirth" in September.

♦**STEP 4.** Publicity blitz during the late spring and summer. Starting in May, insert articles in your synagogue newsletter about your new organization. Also around that time, send out a flyer to all men in the congregation and list all of the exciting new programs and changes. Enlist the aid of one of your members with writing or advertising experience. In August, put up posters in the synagogue and send out postcard announcements of fall programs. Your goal here is to create a "buzz" about your "new" group so that men will want to join when your membership campaign begins in the fall.

♦**STEP 5.** Let the synagogue collect your Men's Club dues, by adding Men's Club dues as a line item on the synagogue bill. In virtually every Men's Club that has taken this approach, its membership doubles. It will also save you the postage of mailing membership statements.

♦**STEP 6.** Plan programming with an open mind and some fresh talent. You have to keep rejecting attempts to program like you have in the past. It's your programming that has caused you to fail. You can't repeat those bad decisions. Ask the rabbi or some other

congregational leader to suggest a few names of men who might be helpful in coming up with some programming ideas. They don't even need to be current Men's Club members.

♦**STEP 7.** Consider what men like to do in their leisure time. Before you start filling in dates with prospective programs, make a list of what younger and middle-aged men like to do in their spare time. This list might include playing golf or tennis, going out to dinner with other couples, going to a movie or show, playing cards, or going to a pro or college basketball game with their kids. If this is what men want to do, have your new Brotherhood (or whatever you're going to call yourselves) provide those activities.

♦**STEP 8.** Select many of the following for your new program schedule, which will appeal to younger men: a Sports Night; an outing to see at least one pro or college game; at least one social program built around beer, and a Brotherhood team or tournament. The beer program could be Monday night football or college basketball's March Madness. Or it could be a monthly card game or a last chance for "liquid chometz" before Passover.

♦**STEP 9.** Select a few from the following (or similar) programs, which will attract men with young children: father-child after-Religious School lunch and sports activity; father-child camping weekend; theater party; 5 or 10 km. run/walk/bicycle race; trivia competition; family Olympiad or Maccabiah Games; barbeque; Super Bowl Party;

day trip by bus; fishing/ ski trip/white water rafting; outing to see a movie with a reception to follow; or progressive dinner.

♦**STEP 10.** Tzedakah projects are something every club should have. Community service activities are sure to attract younger men; try distributing food to the needy, leading Shabbat services at an assisted living home, or collecting clothing for a homeless shelter. And since you're a Jewish organization, you definitely need some Jewish observance projects, like the World Wide Wrap, Men's Club Shabbat, selling Sukkah kits, or working on the Purim Carnival.

♦**STEP 11.** Utilize the FJMC website. The FJMC website has lots of program ideas in many different areas. And try some of the FJMC's programs, such as men's issue programs in its Hearing Men's Voices series. Some only take 15 minutes and others are program-length. These can be on men's health issues, father-son relationships, or a variety of other subject matters. Having a discussion about intermarriage is certain to get a lot of participants. Just go to www.fjmc.org and do a little surfing.

♦**STEP 12.** Put a lot of thought into the implementation of your programs and in the running of your meetings. You've just gone through an exhausting process to reinvent your club and, in so doing, to attract new members. Don't squander all your hard work and wonderful plans. Continually inform your membership of what's coming in the next month or two and try

to involve as many new members as possible.

Yasher Koach! If you take the above steps, you will be on your way to building a successful Men's Club.

FJMC & Regions: How They Help Your Club! Part II (the Region)

In the first part of this two-part article, published in the January Advantage, we spoke about how the FJMC helps your club. But the FJMC is made up of many Regions, which are the conduits of FJMC services for your club. If your image is that the FJMC International organization occupies numerous floors of a towering skyscraper in New York City, only one part of that image is correct. The offices of the FJMC are located in New York City. However, the amazingly small staff of paid employees numbers three (3): Rabbi Charles Simon, Executive Director; Jocelyn Maskow, Administrative Director, and Jennifer Gersch, Administrative Assistant.

Since the FJMC professional staff is so small, the Region comes to assist you. First, the region is geographically closer to your club. While there are some very large regions, like the Western Region, stretching more than 1600 miles from north to south and east to west, from New Mexico, to southern California and up to Seattle, MOST regions are geographically much more compressed. Each of the regions has a structure like your

club, with a President, a number of Vice Presidents, and board members. And each of the Regional officers have been officers, usually presidents, like yourself, of local clubs.

Now, how can they help you and your club? Regions provide a number of things that your club can and should take advantage of. Last issue, we spoke of FJMC consultants, which usually are past regional officers who have been selected and trained to bring both their wisdom of how a club operates and the wisdom imparted by Regional and International officers from around the country. They can help you with your club and whatever problems it may be having. First, they are only a phone call away, and live probably not too many miles from your town or city, so they are usually willing to come and talk to both you and your board to help your club when it is having problems. And, the best part is... it won't cost you or your club anything for this advice and guidance. **Call your Regional President for the name of the Consultant that can help your club!**

The Region also puts on Leadership Development sessions in the Region, often bringing in International officers to help train you and your officers how best to lead the club, develop it so that it will be successful, and, most importantly, develop succession planning, so that you'll become the most sought after position, the Past President of your club. **Take advantage of Leadership Training, for both you and your likely successor, when it is offered.**

Many Regions have regional competition of some sort, whether it be the long-running It's Academic competition of Judaica and general knowledge among clubs which was held by Seaboard Region, a golf tournament, or some other enjoyable opportunity to meet and interact with other Men's Clubs in your region. **Take advantage of this opportunity, and participate.**

Most Regions have some sort of Man of the Year program, whether it be a dinner or a breakfast, in which clubs in the Region are able to honor a member who has provided meritorious service to his club, the synagogue or the community. For many of the honorees, standing and being recognized by hundreds of well wishers, will be a unique moment in their lives, and it can't be duplicated even with a comparable event within your own congregation. **Take advantage of the opportunity, and participate in your Region's Man of the Year Program.**

Many Regions have a weekend retreat, where you have the opportunity to mix and mingle with other Men's Club members throughout the Region, spending a wonderful weekend of bonding and learning from your equals. And many Regions provide generous subsidies to the FJMC's International Convention, held every other year. Since it has just been announced that the 2009 Convention will be in Philadelphia, here's an excellent way to have part of your convention expenses paid by someone else.

In short, it pays large dividends to become more involved in the Region and use the services the Region can provide.

What are you waiting for? Call!

The FJMC (not the Marines) is looking for a Few Good Clubs

The FJMC is looking for a few good clubs who are willing able to create programs around the idea of different types of recycling programs! In conjunction with the FJMC's Project Shomrei Ha-aretz, Guardians of the Land, which seeks to fulfill our Biblical tradition as Stewards or Shepherds of the land, the FJMC is looking for a club (or a few good clubs!) that will organize a recycling based program, like the following examples:

1. A special drop off of members old computers at the synagogue and work with the local department of sanitation to arrange for the computers which contain hazardous wastes to be appropriately placed in a dump. Usually local dumps only have one day a year where people can deposit old technology. It is usually on a Saturday.

2. Another such program would be to get people to donate their old cell phones and arrange to donate them to an organization that can use them. For example, an organization exists that will give them to

battered women to call in case of emergency.

But don't let the above ideas limit your imagination. Recycling can expand to be much more. Mitzvah Man Danny Siegel, whose Ziv Tzedakah Fund [www.ziv.org] (which recently closed its operations after more than 20 wonderful year), told of an individual who found in the dumpster of a local woman's shoe store, dozens of new shoes which were thrown out as they had gone out of fashion, but were perfectly usable. The person spoke to the owner, and arranged for those shoes to be dedicated to a women's homeless shelter, where they were put to excellent use.

So club presidents, get your 'thinking caps' running, and call the FJMC's office with the details of the program you're going to do. The FJMC's toll-free number is 1-800-288-FJMC (3562).

And, you'll be getting a head start on a possible Torch Award program. But more on that in the next issue of The Advantage.

Convention 2009: Mark the Dates on Your Calendar!

The FJMC has announced the location of the 2009 Convention.and the envelope please.

It's Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, the original capital of the United States, home to America's most fascinating founding father, Ben Franklin, and a glorious city to visit with your family. So, put the dates of **Wednesday, July 1st through Sunday, July 5th,**

on your calendar. [And you might want to consider getting there with the family a couple days early or staying a couple of extra days, to be able to take in all that the city has to offer.]

What better place to spend the Fourth of July 2009 than in a city in which so much of American History arose?



Always on the Lookout for
Interesting programs

FJMCAdvantage@fjmc.org

Ask Allan

Dear Allan:

My term as club president expires this June, and I can't find a successor. What can I do?

- Stuck in My Second Term

Dear Stuck:

You have a couple of options. First, see if you can get co-presidents. People are more willing to step forward if they don't have to shoulder the whole responsibility.

I've also heard of a way of going with no real president at all. You have one vice president who runs the meetings, and that's all he does. Another vice

president plans the programming.

That can work if people carry out their responsibilities. You might also ask a past club president to take it again. You also might ask your rabbi or some elder statesman in the Men's Club to step in to prevail on someone to help out.

Dear Allan:

The FJMC keeps billing us for the wrong number of members. How can I fix this?

- Overtaxed

Dear Overtaxed:

The FJMC bases its dues on the number of members you report as of September of the year. That's why it's important that you send the FJMC Office your updated membership list every spring, or no later than the summer – after your

membership solicitation campaign ends. Also, it will serve to delete members who have died or moved away during the previous year. So simply telling the Office that your membership has dropped from 60 to 50 is not enough. We need to know exactly who is on the list and who isn't. As soon as your membership list is updated, you should see a change in the amount being billed. You can contact the Office at 1-800-288-FJMC, and ask that a current list be sent to you via email, and they'll send you instructions how to update and correct your list.

And you should also submit as many e-mail addresses for your members as possible. They'll get the HaShofar, the monthly newsletter from the FJMC that has lots of interesting articles.

REMINDER! YOU CAN BE A WINNER!

For the next 15 minutes shoppers.....

OK, you have until mid-May. As I stated on the first page, the Advantage wants to hear from you about an issue or concern which you or your club is facing. I will review the questions received, and the best one (or two) will receive, **ABSOLUTELY FREE**, a postage-paid copy of one of the FJMC Books, of your choice. Questions can be submitted by regular mail to: Allan Kahan, Editor, FJMC Advantage, 1916 Alabaster Drive, Silver Spring, MD 20904-5303, or by email, FJMCAvantage@fjmc.org (our new, easy to remember, email address.

Quality Club Award Scorecard 2007-08



Now we have a way that you can let us know about your club's local programming without waiting for a regional officer to contact you, and your responses could qualify for the FJMC's Quality Club Award. Simply fill in the blanks below with respect to your club's activity from June 1 of last year to May 31 of this year. Most clubs will not have done each of the criteria, so don't feel that you have to fill in each blank. The deadline for submitting the Scorecard is June 15th.

You do not need to fulfill all of the criteria to earn the award.

Club Name _____ **Club #** _____

City, State/Province _____

Regional and Club Levels –

Criteria with * are required. A club must also achieve 7 others for a total of 8.

- *1. Having a member attend a regional retreat or a consultant-led regional club training session. (If your region doesn't have its own retreat, attending the retreat of another region will satisfy this requirement)

TO BE CERTIFIED BY REGION

- 2. Having a member attend a regional honoree program (such as a man-of-the-year event) or some other regional event that is not training.

TO BE CERTIFIED BY THE REGION

- 3. Holding a program to enhance Jewish observance (other than distributing candles or holding a Wrap) (*Examples: Hebrew Literacy; Art of Jewish Living course; Torah study with the Rabbi; selling sukkah kits*) This is meant to include some kind of hands-on activity and not simply a Sunday morning speaker on the topic of observance.

PROGRAM _____

- 4. Holding a Men's Club Shabbat (*Friday night, Saturday morning, or both*) _____

- 5. Holding a Hearing Men's Voices program or Keruv program (*Examples: any program on men's health; discussion of father-son relationships, men's spiritual being, or men and their work. Keruv programs are eligible ONLY if the Men's Club is directly involved.*)

PROGRAM _____

- 6. Holding a synagogue service project (*Examples: ushering; printing a synagogue directory; a clean-up project around the synagogue*)

PROJECT _____

- 7. Holding a community service project (*Examples: delivering food to the needy; holding religious services at an assisted living home; collecting books and toys for an orphanage*) (*Distributing Yom HaShoah candles does not qualify for this element.*)

PROJECT _____

8. Holding a father-child program or a youth support activity (*Examples: father-child bowling or attending a pro sports game; youth art contest; Camp Ramah scholarships*)

PROJECT _____

9. Participating directly in an activity on the international level to help Masorti Judaism (*Examples: contributing mezuzot, FJMC books, prayer books, tallisim, tefillin, etc. to foreign congregations; corresponding with foreign synagogues to encourage their participation in the World Wide Wrap; contributing funds to synagogues or other institutions affiliated with the international Masorti/Conservative Movement.*)

PROJECT _____

10. Having someone in place as of May 1, 2008, to be the next club president (*does not need to have the formal title of First Vice President, but a person must acknowledge his willingness to serve, and his name must be submitted to satisfy this element*)

NAME OF SUCCESSOR _____

11. Having a regular mechanism to inform members of activities and/or meetings (*Examples: club newsletter; group e-mail; telephone tree; postcards; regular synagogue newsletter articles*)

PROJECT _____

12. Having a written and adopted budget for the 2007-08 program year. _____

13. Having a published calendar of activities for the 2007-08 program year. _____

14. Participated in a joint program with another Men's Club (other than a regional activity)
(can be a Men's Club outside of the Conservative Movement)

ACTIVITY & NAME(S) OF OTHER MEN'S CLUBS

☞ **By June 15, 2008** ☞

send your completed information to consultrk@hotmail.com or mail it to:

Robert Kaplan, 183 Hastings Drive, London, Ontario N5X 1B2, Canada.