

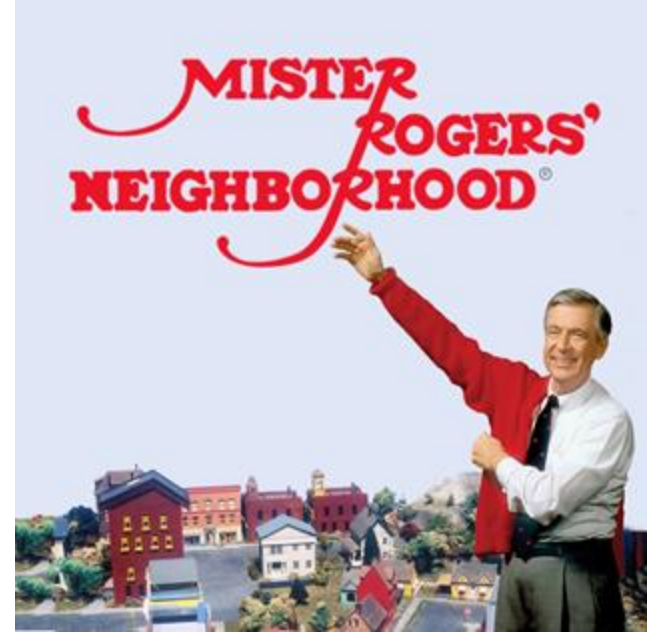
Attracting New Members: The Community Organizer Approach

December 18, 2024
Thriving Communities

Last Time with Rabbi Maurice Harris...

Mr. Roger's Neighborhood Approach:

- Fun
- Minimal Work



Today: The Community Organizer Approach

- Takes a lot of work



Most Important Principle:



Celebrate who you are. Do you -- proudly and confidently. Those who want to be a part of it will take notice and join.

Step 1: Build a Strong Membership Committee

- Populate with members of different core demographics in your community.
- Recruit recent members and long-time members
- Set clear expectations - “this will be a very active committee. We’re looking for people who are excited to conversations with prospective members.”
- Empower committee members to represent the congregation wherever they go.
- Assign your committee members specific roles at community events (including virtual roles).

Do Your Research

- Interview the 10 most recent people to join the congregation:
 - How did you learn about our community?
 - Why did you join?
 - How have you participated in community life since you joined?
 - How did you get looped in to those things?
 - Did you know anyone in the community before you joined?
 - If you were considering other congregations, why did you pick Us over Them?
 - Were there barriers to membership that could have had you join sooner had they not been there?
- Also learn from your departures. Conduct non-judgemental exit interviews with people when they leave the congregation

Gather Data

- Collect registration and attendance data for **all** congregational programs and events.
 - Cross reference with your membership list. The people who aren't members are you prospective members.
- When it's not feasible to gather written data, ask a new person/visitor for their name, remember it, write it down later, and look them up and add them to your prospective members list.
- Proactively add to your prospective members list. Ask committee members and board members to share names of personal contacts they think might be interested.
- Review old membership lists for folks who have drifted away who may be ready to come back.

Send Out Regular Invitations to Prospective Members

- Personalized
- Respectful
- Specific Events
- Something they would specifically be interested in
 - E.g. Young families Hanukkah party, for a prospective member with your children.

Log your Data

- Add notes on your prospective members as you learn more about them.
- If you reach out, log the “touch” so your committee isn’t duplicating efforts (and annoying people)

Follow up a “significant touch” with an invitation to a 1:1

“Hi Jim,

This is Micah from Shalom Synagogue. I really enjoyed speaking with you after services yesterday. Thanks for sharing so vulnerably with me about the challenges you’ve had finding a Jewish community where your Israel politics will be welcome. I wanted to reach out and see if you’d like to get a cup of coffee sometime this month to continue the conversation. I’d be curious to hear more about what it is you are looking for that you haven’t been able to find, and to share some of my own experiences with disagreements about Israel with my friends at Shalom Synagogue. Let me know if you’re interested and we can find a time. Warmly, Micah”



1:1 's on 1 Foot

From the activism world:

A 1:1 meeting is an intentional conversation between two people to build a **public relationship** for action by sharing their **stories**, **self-interests**, values, concerns, and hopes.

Public Relationship

A relationship that is defined by doing work together.

Adapted to Jewish Community:

A 1:1 meeting is an intentional conversation between two people to build a **public relationship** for community by sharing their **stories**, **self-interests**, values, concerns, and hopes.

Public Relationship

A relationship that is defined by belonging to a community and a shared investment in a purpose greater than one's personal interests.

The Goal: Make an Ask

The goals of the recruitment 1:1 are to make a personal connection, use your personal story to identify and gauge potential and interests, probe for a shared experience and connect on values, and lastly, pivot to engagement- that is, move the volunteer to action based on what you've discussed.

Examples of Good Asks

- Would you like to put a date on the calendar to come check out Friday night services with me?
- Would you like me to connect you to the Education Director of our Hebrew School to hear how they've worked with other children who also struggle with frontal classroom learning?
- My friend is on the Tikkun Olam Committee. Can I connect y'all by text and see if you can sit in on their next meeting to learn about the work they are doing?
- We having a prospective members potluck Shabbat dinner in a few weeks. Some of my favorite people in the congregation will be there. Will you come check it out with me?
- What else?

Three Types of “No”

In organizing, there are three types of “no’s” that you will encounter – “not now,” “not that,” and “not ever” – and being attuned to the difference will dictate how you proceed with the person you’re asking. If someone says “no” they might mean “not that time,” so try offering another time or date.

Tips and Tricks for Great 1:1's

- **Share your own story-** think about what stories you can share to **model vulnerability** and genuinely connect with the person
- **70/30:** you should be doing 30% talking, and 70% of the listening in a 1:1
- **Ask open ended questions**
- Don't let it go on too long - An initial 1:1 should be ~**40-50 minutes**
- **Have an ask.** Not always, but very often, 1:1s should end with an ask
 - A good ask is at the intersection between a person's self-interest and what the community needs

Tips and Tricks for Great 1:1's Cont.

- **Be attuned to identities that you may or may not share** with the person you are 1:1ing and be sensitive about how you ask about them.
 - Wait for them to bring it up - and if they don't, don't probe! If information is offered, ask if they'd like to share more about that, for ex "would you like to share more about this?"
- Be explicit about the purpose of the conversation! It's ok to have an "agenda" at the beginning
- **Practice!** Practice 1:1'ing with a fellow committee members.

Celebrate and Integrate Your New Members

Remember: the job doesn't stop when they sign the membership form.

The membership committee should also have steps in place to help integrate new members into the rhythms of the congregation:

- host regular new member gatherings

- create new member mentor opportunities with existing members

A Closing Word of Guidance: Set realistic membership goals

- What demographics does your community primarily serve, today?
 - Start by trying to attract new members who are most “alike”
- Remember: The culture and offerings of your community will be dramatically impacted with a dramatic increase of new demographics.
- Your goal: Who could your community become in five years? (vs. How do we get back to who our community was 25 years ago).