but not have a formal seat on the committee. While the professional certainly deserves the courtesy of being heard in the interests of effective lay-professional partnership, he or she should not have a formal vote, nor be formally identified with the process of selection. To perform its role conscientiously, the committee must assess candidates candidly with the professional spared a formal and identified seat within those conversations.

Over time, with diligent work, this committee can help bring the vision of a working and strategic board closer to reality. That vision includes a commitment to the organization's core values, a willingness to help procure necessary resources, a sensitive use of board members' time, a clear definition of professional-lay roles, and a rigorous dedication to ongoing evaluation and feedback on all aspects of the organization's performance. Our Jewish institutions deserve no less than this — a highly effective organizational governance.

Refashioning Outdated Roles

Susan L. Shevitz

I RECENTLY ASKED the 20 or so participants at a board planning retreat for a well-regarded Jewish communal agency to describe their motivations for volunteering with this particular organization. "My grandmother went house-to-house with the *tzedaka* box.... she was always so proud of what she was doing," recalled a middle-aged participant. Another remembered that "Mom and some of her best friends volunteered here; it was meaningful while they were raising their kids." A younger person took a different point of view, explaining that her firm values service to the community and that "this organization does work that I am passionate about." While these comments reveal volunteers' changing realities, the fact that they organized the retreat also attests to their growing expectations. They believed the agency was not adequately using their expertise and wanted to renegotiate the tacit agreement about responsibilities. They were asking: What should today's volunteers be doing — and who should decide?

These questions are rooted in the history of Jewish communal life in America. As our organizations have changed dramatically over the past century, so have the needs and aspirations of the people involved with them. Since the time, over a century ago, when philanthropists organized, funded, and ran communal agencies and people "of means" served "the less fortunate," the Jewish community increasingly relied on professionals to do its work — from running programs for elderly Jews to providing day care for the youngest. The work is more complex and specialized, and today's Jewish communal professional needs well-honed skills and expertise to succeed.

On the volunteer side, agencies developed a governance structure with board members, originally mostly men, making policy decisions and worker-volunteers, mostly women, assuming what Shuly Rubin Schwartz calls backstage roles. With the changes brought by feminism and economic forces, women have become less available as worker-volunteers, causing what one Hadassah leader called "the pantyhose crisis: if we can find a way to have a meeting when a woman has her pantyhose on, she'll go. But the minute she comes home and they're off, that's it." (As quoted in Edward Shapiro, *A Time for Healing: American Jewry since World War II*, p. 246.) The crisis is as much about *what* a well-educated, competent, and busy woman expects to do as it is about *when* to do it.

Today's volunteers, female and male, are likely to be more affluent, educated, and discriminating than their predecessors. With seemingly unlimited choices about how to spend "discretionary time," potential volunteers gravitate to organizations that use their time, networks, and abilities well — in terms of both agency and volunteer needs. Some may prefer board responsibilities, others backstage roles, but all want to feel that their contributions of time and energy matter — that they are making a difference.

Using time well is complex. The dual structure of our organizations, with volunteer and professional sides, is a great strength — we *all* have a stake in the community — and a vexing problem. How can roles and responsibilities be defined in a way that satisfies volunteers and professionals and is also effective? The old rule-of-thumb, that boards make policy that agency staff and worker-volunteers enact, is no longer a useful model. Highly educated

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professionals are not "civil servants" who exert little influence on the important decisions about which they are knowledgeable. Further, the distinction between setting and implementing policy is fuzzy. While the board determines policy, the people who apply it in real situations shape it. It is not surprising that conflict sometimes emerges when the functions of boards and professionals overlap.

Another feature of this dual structure is the need for "process," i.e. involving the relevant players in decisions and actions. If professionals or volunteers act precipitously the system loses its balance. When there is too much process, volunteers and staff feel their time is not well spent; when there is too little process, they feel disempowered. Maintaining the appropriate balance is a hard job.

A dean of the Jewish communal service field, Gerald Bubis, wrote a book whose title captures the anxiety that besets Jewish organizations today: *The Director Had a Heart Attack and the President Resigned: Board-Staff Relations for the 21st Century*. The president, in this case, was a business owner who alienated staff and disrupted the organization's ability to function by applying practices that had helped him build a successful business. Bubis asserts that it is the shared responsibility of senior staff and senior volunteers to help volunteers "do good and do well."

The impetus to do good is not enough; sophisticated systems that adapt to agencies' changing environments, agendas, and personnel (lay and professional) must be in place in order to make the best use of their most valuable resource: human capital. This can only occur if the partners learn to communicate what matters, to define shared goals, and to determine appropriate and effective ways to achieve them. This calls not only for skill and sensitivity, but for the readiness to question assumptions about how things should be. New patterns will emerge as we openly confront the different perspectives that volunteers and professionals bring to their work and learn to use each others' strengths and capacities to strengthen Jewish life.

Looking Ahead

Yael Kletter

A graduate of Maimonides High School, Yael Kletter is a freshman at the University of Maryland and works for the Tzedek Hillel Foundation as an advocacy intern. She spent 2002-03 in Israel studying at Midreshet Harova, a religious seminary.

I've learned that a good maxim to remember in college is "you only get back as much as you put in." It is a shock to many college students since the maxim does not apply when one is a child. Children are allowed to take from the community, enjoy its gifts, and partake in its events. But now I've realized that my community will only continue to give back if I start contributing to it. Growing up in Boston, I was nurtured and educated at home and in the community at large. One day, I hope to work within that community educating and helping others.

The book of *Sh'mot* is a text bursting with examples of leaders. Moshe, the man of God, is one kind of leader. God gives the orders to Moshe who, in turn, speaks to *B'nai Yisrael*. When the Israelites cross the Red Sea, they witness a new type of leader, Nachshon, who leads the people into and across the water.

What was it about him that commanded the respect and attention of the people? Nachshon stepped into the water *before* it split; he offered leadership as he faced uncertainty. He had no Divine reassurance that the water would part and *b'nai Yisrael* would be saved. Nachson's leap of faith allowed him to do something no one else was willing to do.

To be a leader one needs the moral compass that Nachshon possessed. A leader needs to know that certain values need to be upheld at any cost. It takes a tremendous amount of courage and faith to be a leader. As I make my way through college, I am trying to learn those leadership traits and skills — passion, principles, confidence, and knowledge — and hopefully they will serve me as I serve my community.