

# hazza**News**



**Best Practices Forum:**

## **Getting the most out of Facebook and Twitter**

*Interview with:*

**Yonah Kliger**

*Recently, I had an opportunity to correspond with Yonah Kliger on the subject of how to use Twitter and Facebook to enhance our work in our pulpits. While many cantors already feel overloaded with information and have difficulty understanding how these new resources can fit into our already crowded work schedules, Yonah has jumped in feet first and has achieved impressive results. --Editor*

**HN:** It sounds like you've made it a point to utilize social media in your professional life. At what point did you come to see things like Twitter and Facebook as more than just diversions, or as some people would argue, time wasters?

**YK:** According to a recent piece in the Atlanta Jewish News, living in the age of the Internet broadens the sources of information which craft the values of our generation. Our values form our identities. This shift in values formations results in a shift in identity formation as well. We are, today, categorically different people than those who came before us.

We see relationships within the world differently. Because we recognize that there is a World Wide Web of thoughts, ideas, and people, with whom we can interact, we do! Real relationships which feel meaningful, powerful, connecting and ever-lasting are created in virtual space. Whether it's a good thing or not, the reality is that we talk less but communicate more through text, e-mail, Facebook and Twitter. We use virtual reality to live some part of our life which is no less authentic or legitimate than the actual world in which we live.

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**HN: In what ways do you use social media in your work?**

YK: Social media has played an ever increasing role in my work. I think that many of us have realized the benefits of FB (Facebook) in terms of connecting with our congregants and colleagues. I've even used FB as a means of learning about congregants' illnesses/simchas... even deaths. Twitter is yet another means of connection. Something interesting that we tried earlier this year....On RH, the rabbi asked everyone to take out their phones and "tweet" the answer to the following question, "What are you doing here?" At first, people were a little stunned, but ultimately they did it. I served as sort of an online moderator.

Twitter, because of its 140 character limit, forces you to be more mindful of the content of the message. In my role as clergy liaison to families with young children, I use Twitter as a means of sharing interesting articles, facts, and events. Though I should note, that when social media is truly effective, it's best not to use it as a digital bulletin board of events, happenings etc....rather, it should serve as a means to create a virtual community of interaction.

Finally, if I find an interesting article on prayer, music, theology etc, I can quickly share it with my followers. Similarly, I might pick up an interesting piece from the people that I follow. So, Twitter expands my resource pool. Now I am connected to colleagues all over...many of whom I have never met and may never actually meet in person. I can learn from other clergy (of all faiths, denominations etc) experts in other fields such as music, food, art, social media...you name it.

**HN: What are some specific positive results that you have had?**

YK: I have followers who, when they see me in shul on Shabbat will comment how much they enjoy my tweets on a given topic, and that they actually miss them if I'm silent for a while. This shows me that even though I may not realize it, I'm creating connection. Which to me, is what we are in the business of doing...of course through our music and davening, but in everything that we do...we should constantly be striving to create, and maintain connections, to ourselves, to each other, and ultimately to something bigger than ourselves.

**HN: Are there any mistakes you've made along the way that would benefit others to know about?**

YK: Make sure you learn the ins and outs of the Direct Message Function. You don't want to broadcast a message to everyone that was really intended to be a Direct Message to a unique follower

**HN: It seems like there's a lot to know to really use these new services effectively. How would you recommend that colleagues get started, especially those of us who might be less comfortable with the technology?**

YK: Have no fear, jump in and get started. It wasn't that long ago that we were all trying to figure out how to go from tapes to CDs, and look at how far we've come in a relatively short time.

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