

One of the greatest challenges is the ability to refresh, regenerate and invigorate leadership. Particularly in an era where the demands, interests and values of younger leaders have changed significantly the topography of not for profit organizations.

Volunteerism fulfills a markedly different role for our generation than it had for our mothers and grandmothers. While they looked to charity organizations for self fulfillment and actualization, volunteering their time to engage in useful, productive activities, we younger professionals have other sources of satisfaction and have very different time demands and sensibilities. At the same time, we want to add meaning to our lives and give support to those in need.

While continually revitalizing leadership sounds rational, it can engender strong emotional resistance and entails a significant degree of skill and finesse around change management. The ultimate goal is trying not to dismiss the history and contributions of previous leadership, while making the organization effective and relevant in today's context.

That was essentially the challenge facing AMIT at the start of this decade. For a number of years the idea of forming a board made up of "young" members, ages 30-upper 40's was floated, only to be shelved as something that would engender change in the status quo and thus would shake things up and lead to *who knows what...*

## **ENDORESEMENT & BUY-IN COMES FROM “THE TOP”**

The persistence of a few, forward-thinking members of the Executive Board prevailed, convincing the top leadership that this was a necessary move to keep AMIT dynamic and changing with the times. Approval for the formation of a young board resulted in a phone call from my mother in law, an Executive Board member, asking me to chair the New Generation Board. Our first lesson of the day: have someone do the ask who can't really be turned down...

## **SEGREGATE THE BOARD, GIVE IT ITS OWN IDENTITY & ALLOW IT TO ‘INCUBATE’**

The benefits of having a board limited to young leadership were many: In order to attract AND KEEP our members we needed to conduct business in a way that was efficient, focused and results-oriented. The use of email, teleconferences, fewer actual meetings, but always with punctual beginning and end times, & evening meetings to accommodate working women, became our mode of operation.

Creating the model of the New Generation Board along with my associate chair and a dedicated AMIT staff person became an exciting exercise in creativity and brainstorming. The chemistry between the 3 of us was instantaneous, and the ideas flowed freely. Thus the New Generation Board of AMIT was born:

We decided that a term limit would be defined, along with attaching a significant financial obligation, and the requirement for members and their spouses to attend AMIT's annual Scholarship Dinner every fall. This would ensure that our members would take seriously their commitment to AMIT and its mission, and would help present the changed face of AMIT.

## **THE SELECTION PROCESS**

The process of hand-selecting our inaugural board took a few months. It was imperative that the board be made up of the highest caliber, dynamic people, who would embody the message of AMIT and would work to bring our message to a broad audience.

## **PROVIDE A CLEAR, MEANINGFUL AGENDA WITH SPECIFIC DELIVERABLES**

Once we had chosen representatives from several regions around the country, it was important to formalize the New Generation Board as an integral part of the AMIT structure, included in the highest decision making body of the organization. The New Generation Board was divided into 4 areas of focus { {Israel Committee, Leadership Development, Education and Fundraising}} and its ideas and projects were presented by me at the Executive Committee meetings. Some of our members were also placed on key committees affecting the operations of AMIT (Constitution Committee, Mission Statement, Nominating & Finance).

At the same time, it was vital, in our opinion, to keep the sub-committees and their activities separate from the “old guard” of AMIT, in order to keep our members energized, focused and interested.

## **CUSTOMIZED PROGRAMMING**

We sponsored numerous fundraisers targeting new constituencies: namely men (there were social evenings for couples), business and professional meetings for both men and women, an annual singles event that became THE social happening of the winter season that raised significant money from a brand new base, as well as short-focused missions to Israel opened only to NG board members, that enabled young mothers to leave their families and see first-hand the incredible work that AMIT does.

## **REFLECTION, ASSESSMENT & ADJUSTMENT**

In the 4 years since it was formed, the New Generation Board accomplished many goals it had set. Aside from presenting a new mode of operating and image of AMIT in a very real way, it introduced, championed and implemented a post-high school program for girls that would combine torah study on the highest level with volunteer work. The girls of Midreshet AMIT live in the same dorm as the surrogate families of our Bet Haya'eled Mishpachton in Gilo, and experience daily the challenges of working with the 120 needy children living with them. I can tell you that this unique program is one of the things I'm proudest of, and after having visited Midreshet AMIT last week, meeting the students and staff and seeing the happy faces of the Bet Haya'eled

kids while doing their homework with the Midreshet AMIT girls or playing games and hanging out, I felt very gratified.

## **EVOLUTION TO A NEW AMIT**

The leadership process is fluid and dynamic. Transitioning existing New Generation members onto the mainstream Board while nurturing new leadership to be brought up in the ranks is the challenge that faces us.

By now, several of our members have joined the policy making body of the organization. They now constitute 50% of the Executive Committee and hold 6 of the 9 top offices.

The next phase of development is to empower a new cadre of leadership—we're starting even younger now, with men and women in their 20's, so that the New Generation will become a 'farm system' feeding into top leadership positions within 2 to 3 election cycles.

On balance, when assessing the value of forming a segregated board of young people, the positives clearly outweigh the negatives.

### **POSITIVES:**

- ~Increased sense of ownership by the 30-50 year olds
- ~Increased knowledge and interest in the 25-35 generation
- ~Increased involvement of men

~Increased fundraising: actual and potential

~New understanding of the importance of follow-up to ensure lasting relationships

#### NEGATIVES:

~Feelings of disenfranchisement on the part of some older leaders-  
-the former unwieldy National & Executive Boards have been replaced by the Board of Governors, which provides the opportunity for our more seasoned members to stay active, but their role in the actual running of the organization has diminished.

~Increased reliance on professionals to provide stability where the volunteers used to have a more active role on a day to day basis

~Potential overlap in committee activities with existing Boards

#### CHALLENGES:

~Outreach to and create positions for an even younger generation to keep pace with our 'competition'

~Clear transmission of the values and history of the organization

~Maintaining a link with older donors who are accustomed to a very different organizational model