

Recommendations for Designing Virtual Jewish Experiences

Jewish engagement has, by and large, successfully moved online. As virtual engagement continues, there are ways organizations can enhance and expand their ability to meet the needs of today's young Jews.

- **Design events that address 3 key needs for young Jews - community, fun, fulfillment.** Any given event does not necessarily have to satisfy all three of these needs to be meaningful, but it should satisfy at least one.
- **Intentionally design programming for the virtual environment rather than transferring an in-person program plan to Zoom.** Explore and understand the differences between in-person and virtual engagement, and employ best practices for virtual facilitation and creating social norms, intimacy and connection virtually.
- **Plan for hearts first, minds second.** How participants feel during and after the event plays a key role in whether they feel the event was worthwhile and whether they will attend again – with the same organization or any other. When setting goals for a virtual event, consider how you want people to feel along with the content you want to convey. You are more likely to achieve content goals if you achieve emotional goals first. In addition, while a successful event leaves participants feeling happy and relaxed, poor experiences with virtual events can leave individuals feeling worse than before the event.
- **Plan for the full lifecycle of the virtual events.** Just like you would in-person events, your virtual event should include preparation and expectation setting, the event itself, and follow up.
 - ✓ Set the tone, culture, and social norms in advance and at the beginning of the event to help participants feel relaxed rather than uncertain or anxious.
 - ✓ Don't just offer online programs - look for ways to build on rewarding virtual activities with things participants can do at home following the event - e.g. cooking, writing, reading, art, music
 - ✓ Build in ways for participants to connect personally or in small groups before, during and/or after the event
 - ✓ Follow up after the event with ways for participants to stay connected, keep learning, and/or take action.
- **Do not forget the basics.** Zoom fatigue is real, especially among Jewish young adults ages 18-29, and individuals have a low threshold for technical issues, events that run on too long, events that are not interactive or engaging.