

## CANTORIAL TRANSITION TEAM

Some beginning assumptions:

1. We are preparing for a long-term relationship: how we begin will affect the outcome
  - a. The patterns established in the first 18 months will likely govern the relationship
  - b. Our goals are not based on speed, but enrichment
2. Cantor \_\_\_\_ and the team need to be able to express themselves freely on a full range of topics
3. The nature of the programmatic year is such that after the High Holidays, a cantor has to “hit the ground running”. Therefore it is in everyone’s best interests for many of the introductions to be made before the holidays.
4. The Transition Team needs to enable Cantor \_\_\_\_ to focus for the first 12 months on getting acclimated to the congregation, its people, its systems and its rhythms.
5. The Transition Team is not an evaluative group. Rather it is a support system, a group that runs interference and promotes all around adjustment and well-being.

Goals of the Transition Committee:

1. Introduce cantor to and integrate him/her into the congregation as a whole  
(History, *minhag*, culture, myths, beliefs, norms)
2. Introduce her/him to the congregants and visa versa  
(Subgroups, leaders, supporters, naysayers)  
(Provide many opportunities for congregants to meet him)
3. Introduce him/her to and integrate him into the community at large  
(Resources, players, pitfalls, history, *minhag*, culture)

Topics to Deal with During the First 12 Months: in almost no particular order

1. Congregational History  
Beginnings, “heroes”, days of glory, crises, hopes and dreams unfulfilled
2. Decision Making and Power Structure  
How are board members selected and trained?  
How are they made? Do they represent a broad base?  
How do non-board members influence decision-making?  
Where do rabbi, cantor, and other staff fit in?  
Distinction between Executive Committee and Board of Trustees  
What is the role of the past-presidents?
3. Communication:  
How do congregants find out what’s happening?  
How effective/pervasive are the formal efforts [bulletin, announcements, e-mail, letters]  
How effective/pervasive are the informal networks [how does the word spread]?
4. Role Expectations:  
Who creates, monitors, and evaluates staff members?  
Overload: How to deal with potential for being overwhelmed
5. Leadership Style:  
Discussion of Cantor’s leadership style and how it will mesh with others

6. Conflict:

What norms govern how people handle differences and disagreement?  
What do congregants expect of the cantor when conflict arises?  
If necessary, how do we help the congregation “unlearn” old patterns and learn new ways of dealing with conflict?

7. Worship:

How are the variety of worship needs handled?  
How are decisions on the type, style, frequency and time made and implemented?

8. Life Cycle:

How are policies and procedures determined?  
What are the expectations of cantor at life cycle events (attendance, participation, donations)

9. Congregational Culture:

What kind of community is this? Are people supported/supportive?  
Is everyone welcome? Or are there groups that need extra outreach efforts?  
What types of behaviors are tolerated, encouraged, discouraged?

10. Program:

What does the calendar for the synagogue look like? When and how is it set up?  
What are the programmatic highlights of the year?  
Are there programmatic gaps? Do we need to cut back in certain areas?

11. Creativity and Change:

How open is the congregation to new ideas? How hard does one fight to be heard?  
What channels does one go through to implement a new idea?  
What does the cantor think might be his/her first significant change? (Only happen after 6-9

months)

How is feedback given?

12. Formal Entrance into Temple: Installation Service

When? How? Who should be involved?  
How can we make this a celebration of a new chapter in the work of Temple?  
How do we make this a community event that “shows off” the direction of Temple and invites others to be a part of this growth and movement?

13. What should on-going opportunities for reflection and mutual evaluation look like?

What Things Need To Happen Before/Soon After Cantor \_\_\_\_ Arrives? (By no means an exhaustive list!)

Resources for family:

medical doctors (general, dentists)  
Legal and financial (attorneys, accountant - non member)

Recreational:

Shopping: food, etc.

Resources for Cantor:

Reliable counselors/psychologists for referrals  
Jewish community resources

Plans to meet congregants in a variety of settings:

BBQ for upcoming B’nai Mitzvah families