

## Time for a Raise: The 54,000 Strategy One Year Later

-Mark S. Young

What if *every* supervisor at all Jewish organizations *always* recognized each employee's work anniversary? What if *every* year high-performing employees each received a 5%-7% raise or higher? What if we *properly compensated* and *intentionally celebrated* each person's contributions *every year* and then, *challenged each further* to raise to a new level of productivity and strong results?

If we abide by these sensible management practices our talented Jewish professional staff will remain vibrantly dedicated to their organizations without question or issue. Employee turnover will plummet which will drastically increase the funds needed to pay for these practices. We will organically cultivate and inspire the next cohort of Jewish organizational leadership. Most important, each of our Jewish communal organizations will each become *the best place to work*.

You've read this type of introduction before. Just over one year ago I proposed a big and bold solution for Jewish community: [The \\$54,000 Strategy](#). My argument: *compensate, manage, and professionally develop* our employees well, really well, both monetarily and otherwise. I made the case that *The \$54,000 Strategy* would lead to lower turnover, higher productivity and morale, and an all around stronger workforce. Six months later I provided specific and concrete strategies to help each of us, individually, organizationally and communally, ["make \(this\) change happen."](#)

So, how are we doing? It is my distinct hope that the 5,000 plus readers of the initial piece took these messages to heart. Reflecting on both pieces, I hope you identified ways in which to implement the strategy from your respective seats and vantage points within our Jewish organizational landscape.

*The \$54,000 Strategy* is a collective mission to value those who lend their talents to the Jewish communal workforce and it is not complete if only implemented once. We may hire employees with a competitive starting salary, an excellent manager and opportunities for professional development but, as time goes on, employees must be nurtured. The employer-employee relationship is like a marriage. The elements of the partnership must be reflected upon regularly. We must recognize each partner's contributions, and challenges, as we celebrate, (on our anniversary), the mutual respect and benefits from the union.

In this light, one year later, I call on all of us to give all of our employees an impressive raise, , at least 5%-7% for a strong performer, significantly higher than the 1-3% that is typical of a cost of living adjustment, which is not a raise in "real dollars" at all.

I know what you may be thinking, here goes Mark again, suggesting financial decisions that are outlandish and not plausible. To this I respond, 1) this is plausible. A strong compensation increase for a productive and valued employee is significantly cheaper than repeatedly finding new employees, training them and nurturing them up to a high-performing level. The retained employee will be more productive, driving up mission achievement and revenue (happier patrons and donors = more money). Also 2) consider the 5-7% to be a mixture of compensation increase (which is key), increase in benefits or flexible work schedules, and opportunities for exciting and engaging professional development.

As *The \$54,000 Strategy* advised: as intentional and transparent valuing of our staff goes up, productivity goes up, staff morale goes up, and mission-meeting (and revenue) soars. Simultaneously, costs, heartaches, and turnover plummet.

So, how do we each give all of our employees the annual raises they truly deserve? Through intentional **compensation** increase, **celebration** of their work, and **challenge** to strengthen their growth.

### **Compensation:**

Our employees care about how much money they earn. Salaries are by no means the driving force of our motivations, especially in Jewish non-profit work; but if we do a stellar job each year and are given no raise, or the same increase as everyone else, it can be deflating and de-motivating.

So I challenge us to think about how awesome each of our employees is and *give each what you can and then a little more*. The investment will pay off in the longer term (and thus worth investing in). Also, advocate differentiating increases based on performance (and not just the same increase for all) but, only if the evaluation system in place is thoughtful, fair, properly structured, monitored by trained HR professionals, and consistent throughout the organization.

In addition to direct salary increases, think of the other value-based offers we can provide each employee (that will also help the organization). This can include flexible work schedules, sending employees to enriching conferences, or providing additional vacation or other benefits at no cost to employees. Our creativity can take us a long way.

### **Celebration:**

Part of the benefit of "getting a raise" is not the money or benefits; but, rather, the fact that the recipient, feels "raised" up--that is, feeling more valued and engaged in the work, as a result being celebrated and recognized for their contributions every year by those that matter - supervisors and peers. One of the most important roles of an effective manager is to celebrate his or her staff. To start, have a calendar at your desk of everyone's anniversary of their start date. Try to develop varieties of celebrations that cater to each staff member, unique to each of their values and accomplishments.

### **Challenge:**

Employees do not want to remain stagnant in their jobs. We all want to grow, develop and be challenged, contribute more and be of increased value. Allow employees to be able to say, "*Heneni*," to step up to new challenges and to meet them. Managers should consider the anniversary date of an employee to have such a conversation, ideally as part of a meaningful and robust performance review process, and to identify together areas of new responsibility, new training and new opportunity. This also can be part of the 5%-7%. However, I'd warn that when giving new higher-level roles to employees, there should be commensurate compensation so that employees feel paid fairly for their rising responsibility.

It's time to give our workforce a raise, one that will ensure that we meet our individual, organizational and communal goals. Using *The \$54,000 Strategy* is a prescription for a healthy, happy, productive workforce and an advancing exciting Jewish communal future. *B'hatzlacha – to our success!*

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