



## Disrupting synagogues – what can synagogues and congregations learn from Chabad?

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## The Face of Chabad





## What Drives Chabad?



## Introduction and Goals

- Disruption – what is it good for?
  - What to do when it happens to you?
  - How can you get ahead of the curve?
- Chabad – great example of a disruptive innovator in the synagogue space
- Why are they successful?
- What can synagogues learn?
- What should they do to compete? And perhaps what shouldn't they do?
- Takeaways:
  - Better understanding of disruption
  - Better understanding of Chabad business model
  - Focused questions about how synagogues should adapt/evolve

[Can Synagogues Develop a Playbook to Survive Disruption? – eJewish Philanthropy](#)



## What is Your Impression of Chabad?

Please type your impression of Chabad in the chat room – i.e.:

- How or why they are successful or effective?
- What their main goal is?
- Why many people respond positively to Chabad?
- What their impact is?

## What is Disruption?

Definition: Disruption, noun: the act or process of disrupting something : a break or interruption in the normal course or continuation of some activity, process, etc.

- What often gets disrupted? → Inertia!
- Hayden Christenson, HBS – Theory of Disruptive Innovation
  1. Incumbent businesses innovate and develop their products or services in order to appeal to their most demanding and/or profitable customers, ignoring the needs of those downmarket.
  2. Entrants target this ignored market segment and gain traction by meeting their needs at a reduced cost compared to what is offered by the incumbent.
  3. Incumbents don't respond to the new entrant, continuing to focus on their more profitable segments.
  4. Entrants eventually move upmarket by offering solutions that appeal to the incumbent's "mainstream" customers.
  5. Once the new entrant has begun to attract the incumbent business's mainstream customers en masse, disruption has occurred.

# What is Disruption?

## Key takeaways:

- Not all innovation is disruption.
- Disruption can be low-end or new-market.
- Disruptive Innovation is a process, rather than a product or service.
- Choose your battles wisely.

[What Is Disruptive Innovation? \(hbr.org\)](#)

<https://online.hbs.edu/blog/post/4-keys-to-understanding-clayton-christensens-theory-of-disruptive-innovation>



## Why is Chabad a Disruptive Innovator?

- Chabad is not just one innovation or program or approach – it is a new/different model
- Synagogues have offered a “legacy” approach that essentially hasn’t evolved much
- Good question: Have synagogues have been focusing on the most profitable segment?  
Vs. lowest hanging fruit – i.e., those who show up
- Chabad – started where there were gaps and since moved more mainstream
  - Visiting sick, providing funerals, serving jails, opening campus Chabads were entry points
  - Demonstrated ability to leverage opportunities, extend the brand, bootstrap
- Not just about a new product, service, program, or twist on how synagogues do things – more comprehensive

**Synagogues can learn from Chabad...but also a question of where synagogues should or shouldn't → *ultimately depends on a synagogue's mission and how the congregation defines success!!!***

## Early (or not so early) warning signs?

### "STRATEGIC PLANNING"



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## Key Elements of Chabad DNA

- Why is it someplace someone wants to be?
- Ahavat yisrael? Radical welcoming
- Not about no dues – many give more
  - Opposite approach to viewing dues as emblematic of community
- Here...non-membership based – everyone belongs, everyone “equal” (more in line with today’s zeitgeist)
- Low barrier
- At same time – the rules are black and white (hate the sin, love the sinner)
- Model of charismatic leadership
- It’s all personal – personal relationship with the rabbi, relationships within the community, “family” get together



## Key Elements of Chabad DNA

- Not about consensus; no concerns about lay ownership → no boards
- Yes...a bit of a spectator sport. Even spectators can become enthusiastic fans!
- Single minded focus – spiritual growth for the individual plus Jewish pride (delivered with folksy Chassidic stories and lots of examples of overcoming persecution, power of the Rebbe → highlighting special nature of being connected Jewishly)
- Just do one mitzvah –promoting certain actions that only concern an individual's spiritual well-being (i.e., tefillin, Shabbat candles); they offer no practical benefit for the asker
- Never satisfied – always do one more thing
- Traditionalists; not compromising – who they are...but the positioning also sells in today's morally/culturally relative world
- Public Judaism; pride
- Franchise model
- Iterative/adaptive innovation

# Exploration of Chabad's Model

## What Chabad stands for?

- First and foremost – they have a vision/gameplan
  - See the world through a different lens
  - Shluchim are the “army of HaShem” (Tzivos HaShem)
  - Followers of the Rebbe and his agenda → no spinning of wheels or analysis/planning paralysis
- Ultimate goal is bringing Moshiach and redemption
  - Leads to optimism and drive, but also fatalism – what will be will be and it's all in the hands of HaShem
- Incremental progress good...but never enough; there is always one more thing to do
- Everything is on message/brand – current events are viewed through the lens of/tied back to core message
- A “brand” like Starbucks or McDonald's...or, perhaps more appropriately: Amway
- See themselves as “traditional” pre-denominational Judaism
  - Stand for something “authentic”
  - People like rules
  - Black and white approach; no flexibility or pandering (such as with interfaith families)

Keep your focus!





# Exploration of Chabad's Model

## Focus on Outreach

- Taking it to the streets
  - Proactively find and go up to people
  - No shame or bashfulness; perseverance
  - Delivering challah before Shabbat, free menorahs, matzah baking in supermarkets, etc.
- Lots of added rituals and holidays, special occasions; always an occasion.
- Active marketing, personal outreach (and its infectious)
- Worship/services as spectator sport
  - Praying is easy, “God understands all languages”
  - No strings attached
  - They don’t make people who don’t know feel dumb or out of place. “God understands everybody’s language...”
- As startups, rabbis focus on gaps in the community and leveraging relationships from there – prison, special needs, chaplaincy/*bikur cholim* (visiting the sick in hospitals, nursing homes)
- Same low barrier approach to Hebrew schools, pre-schools, events
- Cross-marketing – each of these entry points is a feeder to doing more

## Taking It To The Streets



Public “in your face” PRIDE







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Before Nov. 1 \$20 | RSVP [JewishOrlando.com/Megachallahbake](http://JewishOrlando.com/Megachallahbake)  
After Nov. 1 \$25 | For more info, contact Chani 321 948 6821  
or Shaina 5626731908

## Program elements:

- On message
- From the “matriarchy”
- Positive “proud” theme
- Large scale
- Outreach focused
- Community building
- Accessible cost
- Upgrade funding oppty
- Slick messaging



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Imagine a Hebrew School where kids don't want to miss a day. They come in with a smile and leave humming a Hebrew song. Walking through the halls, you can hear the sounds of lively discussion, of singing, laughter, and prayer. Imagine a child who feels the warmth and spirit of Judaism. Imagine the pride of his/her parents.

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REGISTER

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## Exploration of Chabad's Model

Chabad recognized long ago what many

mainstream organizations

learned later: **more touches →**

**stronger Jewish identity**

## Exploration of Chabad's Model

### **Everything's Personal**

- Ultimately, Chabad is successful through one-on-one, personal relationships
- This theme starts with a Chabad House
  - Often a real home (yes...helps with bootstrapping a program, but it is also symbolic!)
  - Changes the feel/flavor of engaging people – tying into what people associate with positively (vs. many synagogues alas)
  - Also centers Jewish life in a family – invitations to Shabbat dinners, holidays
- Family business – leverages entire Chabad family to engage and sell Judaism
- Also, other practical benefits in terms of cost – parsonage, food budget, etc.
- Personal communications and “old school” CRM approach with texts, whatsapp groups, calls, personalized family holiday greeting cards



It's all Personal – Chabad family as building block





## Exploration of Chabad's Model

### **Business Model Components**

- Scalable model; can be one house with 20 or 800 attendees
- Limited by # of relationships can be managed by a couple or family...also scalable
- Pyramid franchise model – expansion only by extent of Jews' availability and \$\$
- Chabad rabbis focus on their strengths...following the Chabad playbook
  - No administration or bureaucratic layers
  - Emphasis on relationships and “Judaism”
- Multiple products/profit centers
- Suggested couverts or donations for activities
- Fees add up
- Plus each separate program area can make for a distinct fundraising ask or sell
- Result: flexibility in budgeting



CHABAD OF FLORIDA

[Chabad Calendar Events](#)

[Florida Chabad Centers](#)

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## PROGRAMS



## CHABAD HEBREW SCHOOL

Chabad Hebrew School offers an education that will inspire children for a lifetime. Our curriculum instills pride, history, love for Israel and a genuine understanding of what Judaism is all about.

[Learn More](#)

## ADULT EDUCATION

Discover your roots through Torah Study classes in a wide range of topics. Education to suit your style.

[Learn More](#)

## SHABBAT AND HOLIDAY

There's a special warmth at our synagogue services that melts away any embarrassment for those unfamiliar with, or new to, communal prayer. Our Doors Are Open To All!

## PRE SCHOOL OF THE ARTS

Shore Jewish Academy offers an education and memories that will inspire children for a lifetime. We create an environment that fosters creativity and supports your child's unique style of learning.

[Learn More](#)

## HAND IN HAND

Hand in Hand extends a helping hand to special needs children and their families. It involves the children while providing an exciting growth opportunity for its teenage volunteers.

[Learn More](#)

## CHABAD ON CAMPUS

Chabad on Campus at Monmouth University provides religious, educational, social, and recreational programming for the community of Jewish students.

[Learn More](#)



Growing up with a conservative affiliation, I never would have imagined I would be a regular at a place like Chabad. I found out very shortly after arriving how warm and welcoming the rabbis and congregants are. Additionally, I discovered how meaningful, timeless and applicable the prayers, studies and traditions are to my everyday life. Only in hindsight can I see how much I needed the spiritual nourishment that the Chabad provides. My family is extremely grateful to Chabad

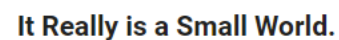




## Jewish Women's Circle

The Jewish Women's Circle is a group designed for the contemporary woman. The goal of The Jewish Women's Circle is to unite all Jewish women through exciting events and activities.

[A Message from Chabad on Campus International CEO, Rabbi Yossy Gordon](#) [READ MORE](#)



Ever played a game of Jewish Geography? Question your fellow Jew for long enough, you'll eventually find a Jewish friend in common. That's the connective power of Jewish community—something we experience every day at Chabad on Campus.

Our Chabad Houses kindle the hearts and minds of Jewish students at colleges around the world. They are hubs outside of the classroom where old friends and new friends become family. Each on-campus house is genuinely home to a rabbi, a rebbetzin, and their children. To you, it's a home away from home, whether you're non-practicing, somewhat observant or totally traditional.

### A Family Dinner (Without the Guilt).



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OF WESTERN MONMOUTH COUNTY

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# JEWISH BUSINESS NETWORK OF MONMOUTH COUNTY



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## JBN Meetings

Breakfast: 7:15 - 8:15 AM  
Lunch: 12:15 - 1:30 PM

Chabad House, 24 Wickatunk Road, Manalapan

## JBN Directory

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### Our Program

Summer at Gan Izzy is a magical Jewish Day Camp experience for all ages.



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Grab your spot. Summer of 2022 registration is open now!



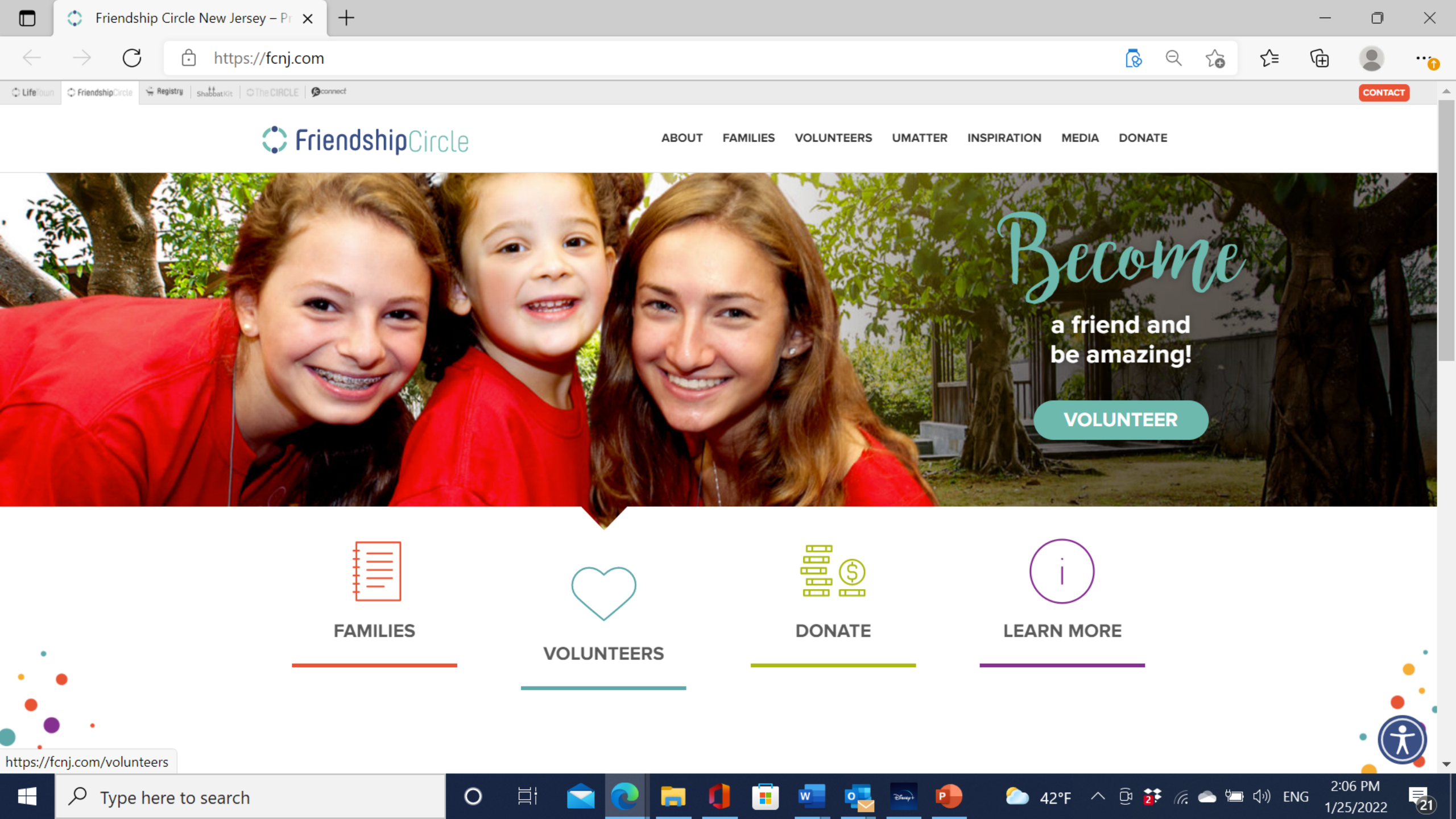
### Calendar

Gain insight into the iconic theme and program of the summer.

## LATEST PHOTOS







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be amazing!

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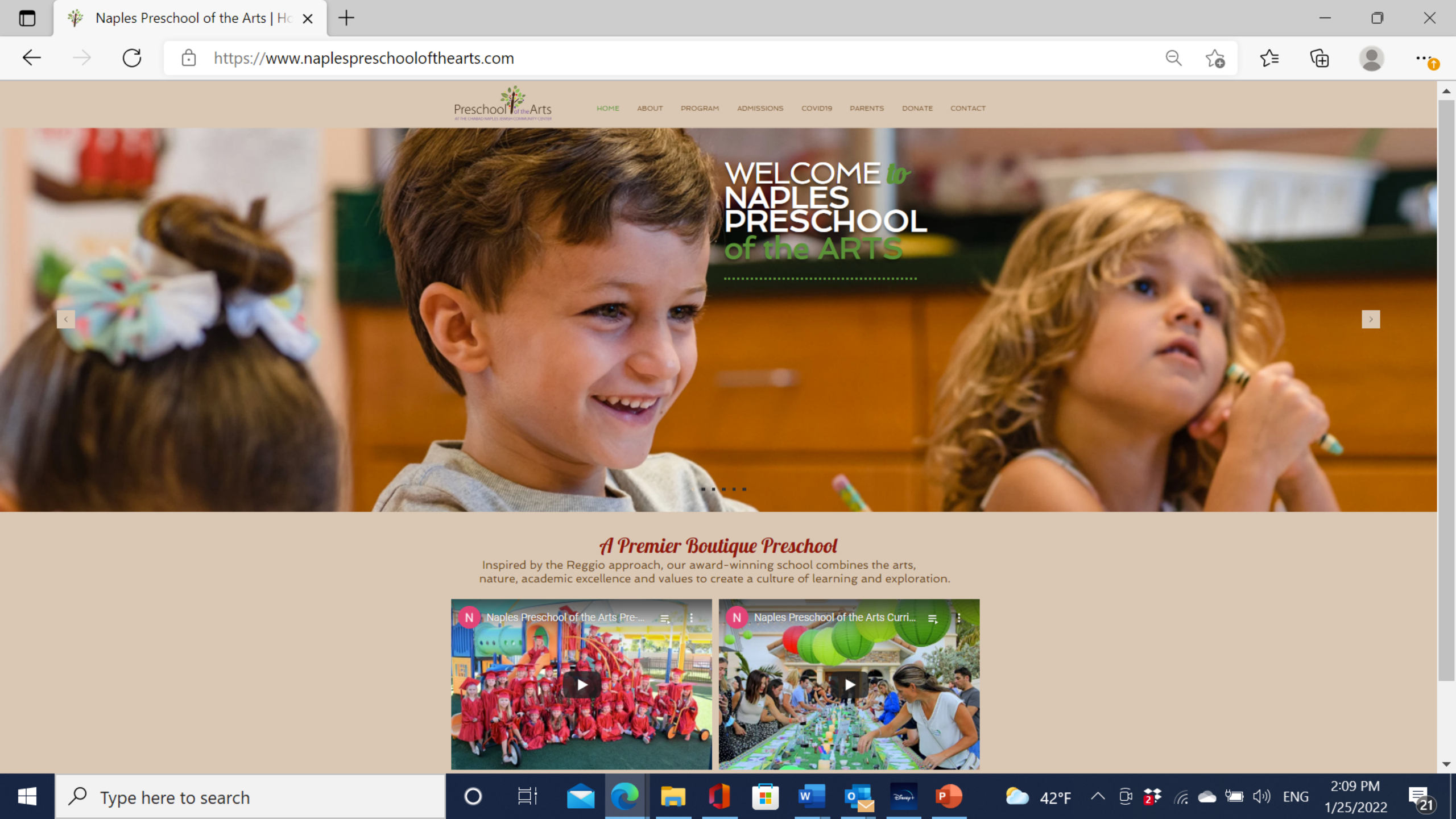
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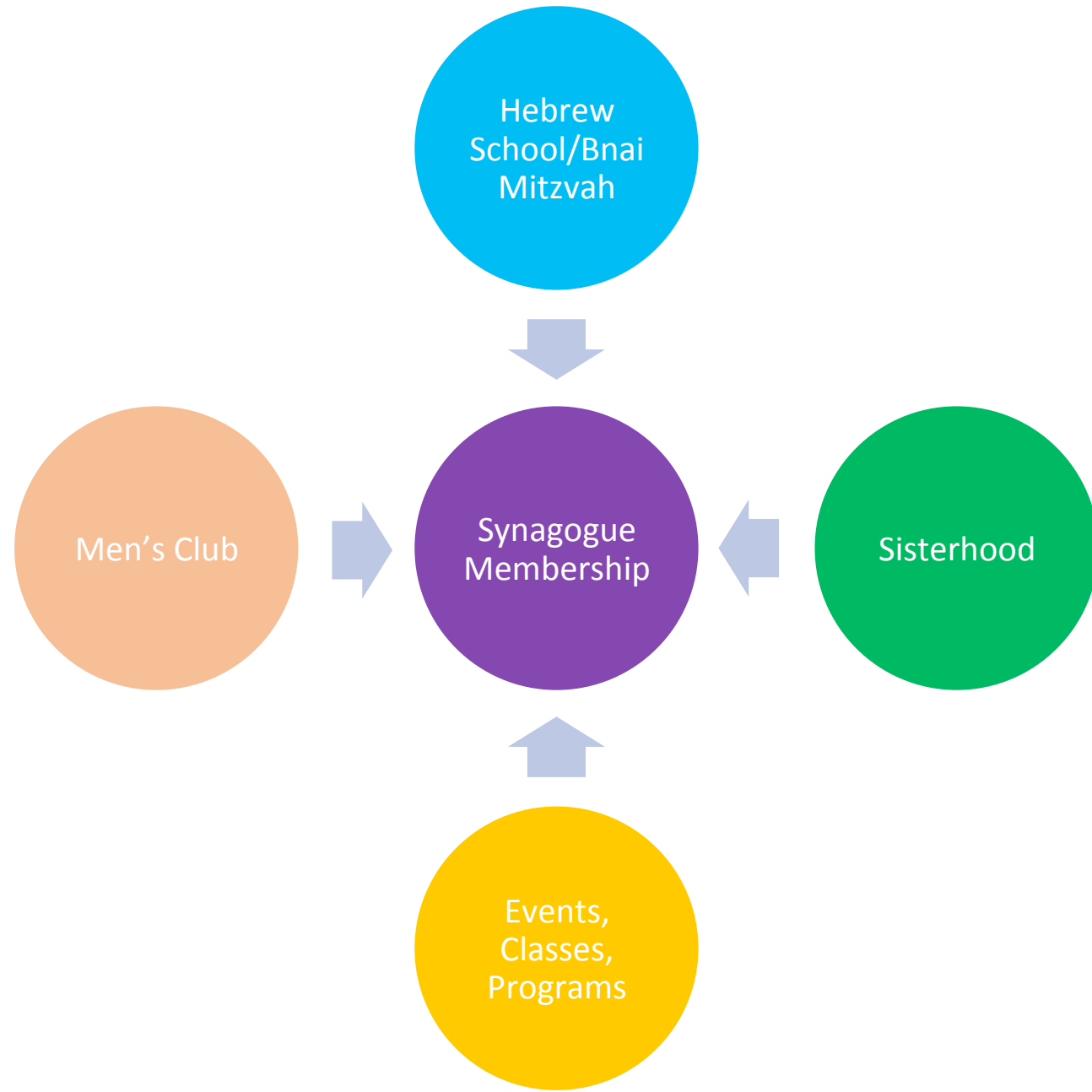




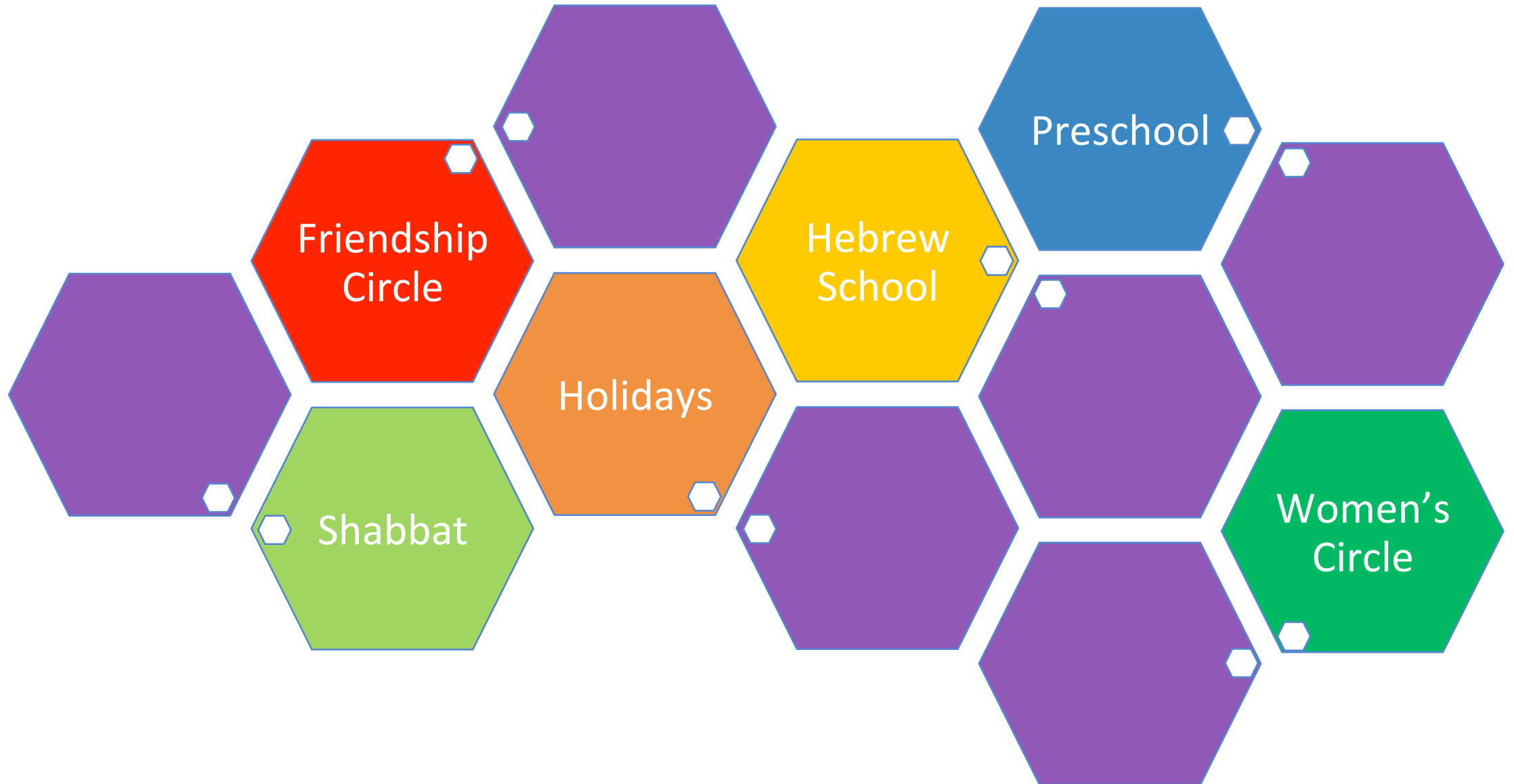
## CHABAD HOUSE PROGRAMS & SERVICES

- ♦ Jewish Art Calendar
- ♦ Community Holiday Celebrations
- ♦ Sunday Hebrew School of the Arts
  - ♦ Complete Jewish Website
  - ♦ All Life Cycle Events
  - ♦ Crisis Counseling
- ♦ Community Social Services
- ♦ Bat/Bar Mitzvah Training
- ♦ Online Judaica Store
- ♦ In-House Judaica & Book Store
  - ♦ High Holiday Services
  - ♦ Hospital Visitation Program
- ♦ Homebound Visitation Program
  - ♦ Prison Visitation Program
- ♦ Adult Jewish Learning Institute
  - ♦ Jewish Women's Circle
- ♦ Community Shabbat Dinners
- ♦ College Campus Outreach
- ♦ Synagogue Services
- ♦ Asheville Kashruth Commission: Glatt Kosher Certification, Supervision, Catering, & Kitchen Koshering

# Synagogue Model

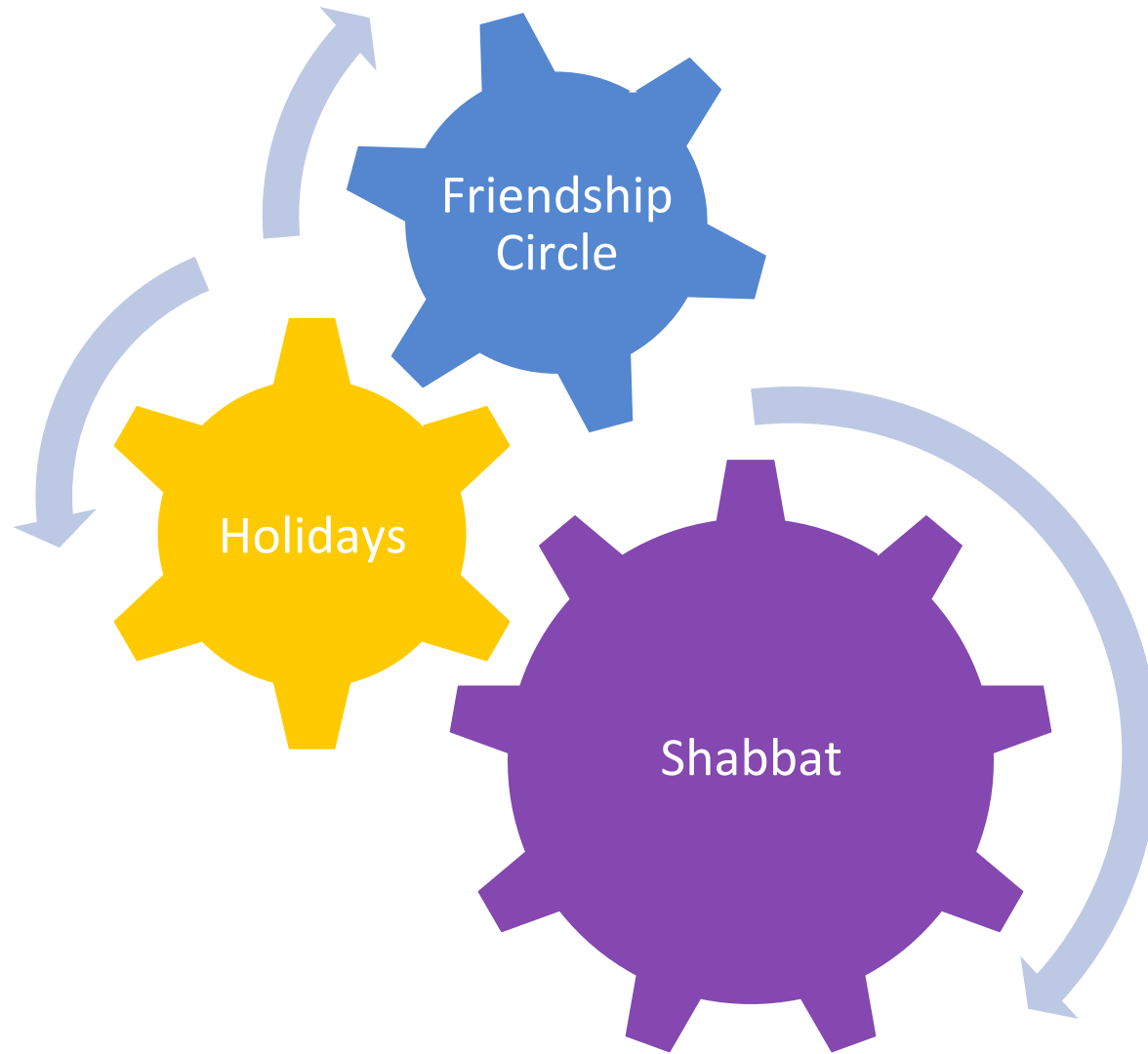


# Chabad Model





## Chabad Model



## Exploration of Chabad's Model

### **Role of the Rabbi**

- Starts with choosing of a rabbi
- Evangelist, prepared for “standing tall in isolation”...mesirat nefesh
- Family anchor. Self sufficient. Personal support network.
- My way or the highway re rabbinic leadership – “benevolent dictator”
- Success or failure based on rabbi and personalities. Rabbis also chosen with ability to succeed
- Position is for life. Not just /more than a job
- No committees. No volunteer expectations, accountability – other than success in growing #s and mitzvot

## Exploration of Chabad's Model

### Network Effect

- Great shaliach support network – giant community of practice
- Also support network within large families – many kids are shaliachs in different places...or in the same area where a franchise may be larger
- Resources to connect those doing similar work – regular kinus, publications with “cliff notes” material, listservs, Chabad media
- Led to development of entrepreneurial marketplace
  - Virality built in
  - Rapid adoption of innovation
- Example of other franchise brands – helps marketing of each location
- Chabad.org – consumable resources for B2B and B2C

## Network Effect






Dedicated by Moris and Lillian Tabacnic · In loving memory of Menachem Mendel and Shaindel Tabacnic



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The Jewish Woman  
**I'm Pregnant and Feel I Can't Handle a Baby Now**



The Jewish Woman  
**12 Women Who Impacted Torah Scholarship**

 **Today in Judaism**  
Wednesday, January 26 / 24 Shevat

**Today In Jewish History**  
**Zachariah's Prophecy** (351 BCE)  
"On the 24th day of the 11th month, which is the month of Shevat, in the second year of the reign of... [Read More »](#)

**Passing of Rebbetzin Menuchah Rachel** (1888)  
Rebbetzin Menuchah Rachel Slonim.

## Exploration of Chabad's Model

### **Keeping Eyes on the Prize**

- How Chabad works in the community – everything focused on mission, their agenda
- Shlichim – always “on” and in character (like Disney)
- Avoids engaging (being distracted) with other issues, i.e.,
  - Approach to Israel
  - Interdenominational issues
- Fundraising – everybody is equal, but some more equal than others

## Key Highlights

- You can't dismiss the Chabad phenomenon:  
[Bucking Trends, \\$100 Million in Capital Campaigns Highlight Chabad's Continued Growth - Confronting the challenges of Covid, people from across the spectrum of Jewish life flock to Chabad. - Chabad-Lubavitch News](#)
- Personal focus = positioning rabbi as more of a friend vs. more distant leader/religious figure
- Worship is in many ways incidental to the relationships built and community established...
- Something "retro" having a very clear (and narrow) identity – and retro is in
- Having multiple entry points can be important – if you are looking to engage new folk
- Importance of having the focus not be self-centered

## Contrasts & Comparisons for Synagogues

- Chabad growing. Most synagogues...not
- Role of the rabbi
- Submission to ultimate authority vs. consensus driven (i.e., boards)
- Clarity of mission and degree to which that drives activity – narrow scope vs. broad approach
- Personal approach; focus on relationships
- Use of space; scalability
- Goals of education – positive feeling and connection vs. skills
- Quality of programs; slickness of marketing
- Network as giant community of practice
- ???



## Questions & Takeaways

- How clear are you about your mission and what your congregation or synagogue stands for? How should this drive or shape what you do?
- How can you answer this question: What do you stand for?
- Similar question: How do people in your synagogue feel like they belong? (Vs. Chabad?)
- What are implications for more streamlined, or more of a top-down leadership approach? Pros/cons?
- What could an alternative model for your synagogue look like if done successfully? (i.e. partnership minyan, chavurah)
- Is the personal relationship approach or model relevant or possible in your synagogue? What can that look like?
- What might be learned in terms of approaching dues or fees or fundraising?
- What are implications for how you should package your synagogue's programming?

Thoughts?

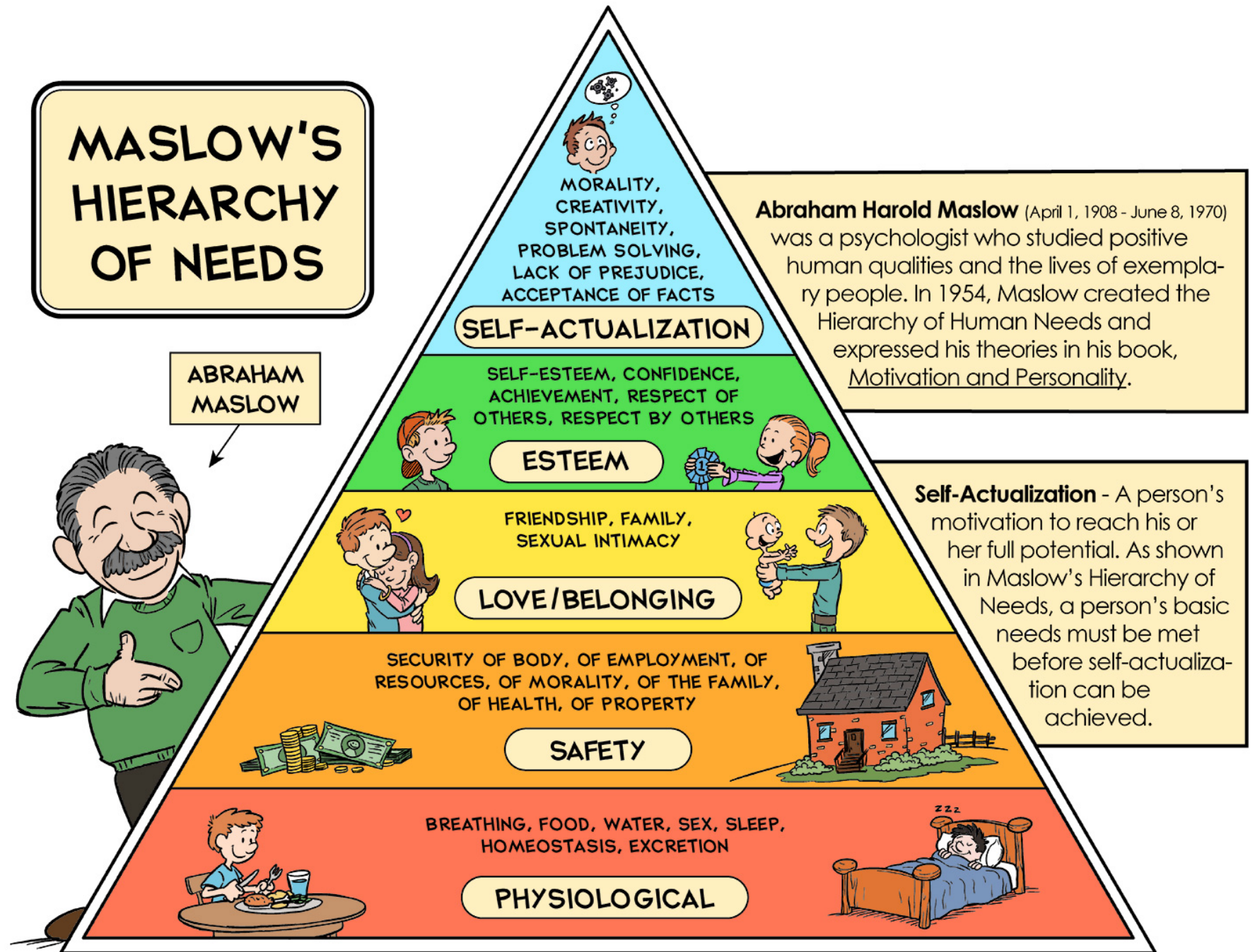
Reactions?

Ideas?

Possibilities?

Next steps?

People look for different things – what do you provide?



“Change before you have to.” -Jack Welch

“When you're finished changing, you're finished.” -Benjamin Franklin

“I cannot say whether things will get better if we change; what I can say is they must change if they are to get better.” -Georg C. Lichtenberg

“To improve is to change; to be perfect is to change often.” -Winston Churchill

The New Normal Project brings together experts who specialize in strategy, change management, and operations/implementation in the non-profit space. The aim is to help organizations adapt to new or challenging circumstances and get “ahead of the curve.”

**If we can be helpful in your strategy planning, let us know!**

**Principal: Keith Krivitzky, [theideabank@gmail.com](mailto:theideabank@gmail.com)**

