

# High Holiday Marketing & Communications Guide for Synagogues

*Created for use by all synagogue professionals and lay leadership*

Compiled by:

Candace Gaswirth, Manager, Marketing and Communications

Mindy Gordon, Synagogue Consultant, Central District

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# BASIC COMMUNICATIONS PLANNING & TIMELINE

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## STEP 1: DEFINE YOUR OFFERINGS

- Finalize and make a detailed list of all services, programs, classes, etc. that your synagogue will be offering as part of the 2020/ 5781 High Holidays.
  - ◆ Consider how the synagogue will engage special audiences for the High Holidays, such as LGBTQ, visually or physically impaired and the elderly. This is particularly important regarding proper access to physical spaces and use of/familiarity with communications technology and video calling.
- Break that list down into categories that would be helpful to your congregation by holiday, category (ritual, education, etc.), by date, by building/ location, or digital platform.

## STEP 2: ESTABLISH YOUR CHANNELS & GET SET UP FOR SUCCESS

### → EMAIL

#### ◆ Mass emails/ E-blasts

- There are many email systems that allow you to use simple drag and drop tools to create attractive emails and send them to large lists of people. There are both free and paid versions of these systems.
  - Recommendations: [Constant Contact](#) or [MailChimp](#)

#### ◆ Personal/ Business Emails

- Consider adding a line to staff members' email signatures that directs people to your website's High Holiday information. Be sure to hyperlink text to take the user directly to the appropriate page.

- Example:

**Jane Schwartz**  
Director of Membership  
Phone: (123) 456-7890 x123

 **USCJ** Seek meaning together

Congregation United Synagogue's High Holiday schedule is now available. [Visit our website for more.](#)

## → WEBSITE

- ◆ Your website is your synagogue's "handshake" and the place where people will go first to find basic information. Do your best to ensure it is clean, easy to navigate and well designed, but MOST importantly: UP TO DATE!
- ◆ Make sure High Holiday information is highly visible to find on your site by adding a button, drop down, menu item, and/or image on the homepage. If you are offering services for particular groups of people (youth, LGBTQ, families, seniors, etc.), make sure that information is clearly denoted. Include contact information (email and phone, if possible) where people can reach out with questions.
- ◆ If you already work with a web developer/designer, have them help you ensure that your website is in the best shape possible. This includes optimizing your site for mobile devices.
- ◆ If you work on your website yourself (or need to create one!), there are great tools available that require no web design experience.
  - Recommendations: [Squarespace](#), [Wordpress](#), or [Wix](#)

## → PHONE CALLS

- ◆ During the pandemic, many synagogues have established committees to call congregants by phone, to check in on how they are managing. This method can also be used to make sure congregants have received and are familiar with upcoming High Holiday plans.
- ◆ If a telephone call committee is created, provide individuals with a simple

phone script to ensure consistent messaging. Create a mechanism for recording feedback so adjustments can be made along the way.

## → SOCIAL MEDIA

- ◆ Although email will likely remain the primary way you will communicate about the High Holidays with your congregation, social media is a great way to further promote your offerings and engage with constituents.
  - Basic: [Facebook](#)
    - What it's good for: Facebook can be used for everything from communicating about the High Holiday schedule and related news and events, to sharing photos and videos. You can also share articles and other items from the web related to the High Holidays.
      - ◆ [cjhighholidays.com](#) has plenty of articles that are suitable for sharing.
    - If you don't already have one, [create a Facebook page](#) for your synagogue.
      - ◆ Note: A Facebook page is DIFFERENT than a group or personal profile.
    - Facebook can be managed from a desktop computer or on the app on a mobile device.
  - Advanced/ Optional: [Instagram](#)
    - What it's good for: Instagram is a photo and video-sharing social networking platform that should be used for exactly that: sharing photos and videos. You cannot create a post on Instagram that does not have an accompanying image.
    - If a high percentage of your congregants are from ages 35-50 and use Instagram, then consider [creating an Instagram business profile](#) for your congregation.
    - Instagram can only be fully managed from the app on a

mobile device.

- Advanced/ Optional: [Twitter](#)
  - What it's good for: Twitter is best used to communicate short messages (there is a 280 character limit per post).
  - If a high percentage of congregants use Twitter, then consider [creating a Twitter account](#).
  - Twitter can be managed from a desktop computer or on the app on a mobile device.

## → PHYSICAL SIGNAGE

### ◆ Marketing signage

- If your building is in a high traffic/ visible location, consider creating printed banners, posters, or other signage to inform people of vital information regarding your High Holiday offerings/ schedule.
- If your building has an exterior bulletin board or adjustable sign, use it to inform and/ or drive people to your website.
- Use exterior signage to promote brand awareness, holiday themes and individual programs

### ◆ Directional signage

- If you are [opening any physical spaces](#) for High Holiday services, make sure you are using proper signage to enforce safety measures and social distancing, traffic flow, and directional information.

## → DIRECT/ SNAIL MAIL

- ◆ If you find that printed letters and/ or postcards are an effective way to communicate with your congregation, ensure that those materials are well-designed, easy to read, well proof-read, and properly branded with your synagogue's name/ logo.
- ◆ There are many online tools available to help with design templates, or

consider hiring a local graphic designer to help take your content and make it attractive and compelling.

- Recommendation: [Canva](#)
- ◆ Leave PLENTY of time for your pieces to reach your audience and ensure that you are taking advantage of [non-profit postage rates](#) (although they are slower than standard).

## → ADVERTISING

- ◆ Basic: [Boosting Facebook posts](#)
  - Boosting posts is a fast, easy, and relatively inexpensive way to improve your congregation's visibility and reach new audiences. Plus you can use content you're already creating for your social posts.
  - Make sure to boost a post that explains who you are, what you're offering, and where to find more information. If you're going to reach new people, you want to peak their interest and give them the tools to learn more about you.
- ◆ Advanced/ Optional: Purchasing ad space with local outlets

## STEP 3: SET YOUR TIMELINE & CONTENT

→ After you've established **HOW** you'll communicate with your congregation, focus on the **WHAT, WHEN, and WHO**.

→ Map out what will need to be shared with whom and when they will need that information

- ◆ Be sure to communicate frequently and consistently, but also to make sure information that is time sensitive is shared accordingly
  - For example, if there is limited physical space and a deadline to sign up for High Holiday services, make sure you are communicating directly with that audience in plenty of time for them to act on that

deadline.

- For example, an email subject line that says, “Time Sensitive: Limited Number of In Person Seats Available for Rosh Hashanah” communicates a strong call to action.
- ◆ Focus on what you can prepare ahead of time to maximize the amount of time and attention you can give to unexpected changes you’ll have to make later.
- ◆ Sample communication cadence (your audience might warrant more or less):
  - Emails: 1-3x/ week
  - Social posts: 3-7x/ week, increasing closer to holidays
  - Website updates: As often as necessary
  - Direct/ snail mail: 1x/ month (if using)
- ◆ Recommendation: Use a template [like this one](#) to keep your entire editorial calendar in one place.

## STEP 4: EXECUTE YOUR PLAN

- You’ve set your schedule and mapped out your plan -- now just follow it!
  - ◆ Try to work ahead whenever possible, so that you do not have to finish communications at the last minute or fall behind schedule.
- Be ready to answer questions
  - ◆ Once you start on your plan (especially if you are upping your communication game) expect that people are going to have questions. Make sure you have a way for them to reach out to get clarification on information you’re sharing. It’s helpful to have an FAQ reference document available, including projected questions and answers.
  - ◆ It is critical to respond as quickly as possible to all inquiries. This is especially important this year when congregants are feeling unsure about a

markedly different High Holiday season and also considering membership renewal. It's often helpful to assign this responsibility to a staff member or lay leader.

## STEP 5: COURSE CORRECT

- Is something not going the way you expected? Have you gotten constructive feedback from your community that you can incorporate into how you communicate with them?
- Don't be afraid to make changes to your High Holiday planning mid-stream. Better to recognize something is not working and make appropriate adjustments than to get to the end of the High Holidays and regret not changing course when you had the opportunity.

## STEP 6: ANALYZE YOUR SUCCESS

- Take note of anecdotal successes/ failures:
  - ◆ How did it feel to execute your High Holiday marketing and communications plan? What did you sense could be improved in the future? What feedback did you get?
- Take note of data-based successes/ failures:
  - ◆ Most communication tools/ systems will have a way for you to see how well your communications did (i.e. how many engagements, shares or likes on social media or click through rate on emails)
  - ◆ Tracking and analyzing this data will allow you to make changes in the future and to improve upon all the hard work you put into your High Holiday communications

# AUDIENCES

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When scheduling communication (particularly emails) make sure you are directly addressing the needs of different audience groups. If possible, create different distribution lists so that you can email specific people about issues that apply to them...or combine lists for more general communications.

## PROSPECTIVE MEMBERS

- If your synagogue has a list with contact information for prospective members, include them as an audience in your marketing plan.
- Prospective members could include non-members who:
  - ◆ Have participated in another offering (online services, holiday activity, class, etc.)
  - ◆ Have expressed interest or asked a question about your synagogue
  - ◆ Have been members in the past but have not rejoined
- Think of easy ways for prospective members to get to know you and get involved and include incentives for them to join, such as:
  - ◆ Posting video clips from previous classes, events, or other offerings (both from during and before pandemic)
  - ◆ Offering free or discounted memberships or online access to High Holiday services
  - ◆ A “package” of offerings for new members, such as mahzorim or siddurim to use at home, free classes, social opportunities, etc.
- Prospective members are best reached through:
  - ◆ Social media (both boosted and organic posts)

- ◆ Direct email, mail, and phone calls, if contact information is available
- ◆ Local advertising

## CURRENT MEMBERS

- Keep your current membership engaged by making sure they are aware of everything they have access to during the High Holidays and beyond.
- Remind them of the perks of membership so they are incentivized to attend High Holiday services and rejoin for the coming year AND to donate to annual fundraising campaigns.

## SPECIAL GROUPS

- Make sure you are considering how you can address the needs and communicate directly with members of special groups, including:
  - ◆ Seniors
  - ◆ Young couples/ newlyweds
  - ◆ Families
  - ◆ Youth
  - ◆ LGBTQ
    - See [Keshet's Inclusion Guide for Synagogues](#)
  - ◆ Disabled/ hearing and visually impaired
    - See USCJ's updated High Holiday Inclusion Guide: [Open Wide the Gates, So That All May Worship](#), as well as these resources:
      - [USCJ Inclusion Checklist for Events and Programs](#)
      - [Disability Planning Roadmap, The Jewish Federation of Greater Washington](#)
      - [Ruderman Synagogue Inclusion Project](#)

# TECHNOLOGY

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## USE OF TECHNOLOGY ON YOM TOV

- The Committee on Jewish Law & Standards (CJLS) has a [teshuvah](#) (statement of Jewish law) regarding the use of livestreaming and virtual meeting technologies on Shabbat and holidays.
  - ◆ There are a variety of technologies that can allow you to present services if your physical space will not be open for the High Holidays.
  - ◆ Recommendations: [Zoom](#) and [Streamspot](#)

## TECHNOLOGY OPTIONS FOR SERVICES AND OTHER HIGH HOLIDAY EVENTS

### → ZOOM

- ◆ What is it? [Zoom](#) is an interactive, cloud based meeting platform that can be used with audiences of all sizes. There are various plans and pricing options available.
- ◆ USCJ Member Discount
  - [USCJ affiliates receive a 15% discount](#) off all newly opened accounts using the code USCJ-ZOOM (apply discount code prior to checkout).
- ◆ Controlling Zoom Access
  - Synagogues are able to [control access to their services](#) so that members and others who have purchased tickets are given exclusive access. Zoom can accomplish this with unique passwords that are only distributed after individuals are approved/ granted access.
- ◆ Tracking Zoom Participants
  - You should track who participated in your High Holiday Zoom services and programs to identify both members and prospective

members.

- [Keeping a roster of registrants](#) also allows you to follow up and/or request donations. To do this, enable your Zoom meeting with [registration](#) or [polling](#) and you will be able to generate a registration or polling report for further analysis.

#### ◆ Zoom Capacity

- Zoom plans allow up to 100 participants by default in every meeting (up to 500 with Large Meeting add-on). You can host an unlimited number of meetings, but if you would like to have more than one meeting concurrently, you will need additional host licenses.
- Zoom offers a full-featured Basic Plan for free with unlimited meetings. Try Zoom for as long as you like - there is no trial period. The Basic plan has a 40 minutes time limit on meetings with three or more total participants.

#### ◆ Optimizing Zoom Events

- For information and tips on optimizing Zoom calls, we invite you to review the June 18th webinar, "[Taking Zoom Programs and Services to the Next Level](#)," along with [related materials](#) and [eJewishPhilanthropy article](#)

### → STREAMSPOT

- ◆ What is it? [Streamspot](#) is a simple and user-friendly end-to-end livestreaming solution.

#### ◆ USCJ Member Discount

- [USCJ affiliated synagogues](#) can get a 25% lifetime discount on service plans and a 10% discount on equipment with Streamspot. This offer also applies to congregations already using Streamspot, who can receive the discount moving forward.

#### ◆ Optimizing Livestreamed Events

- For more information and tips on livestreaming, we invite you to

review the June 24th webinar, “[Enhancing Your High Holiday Live Streaming Experience](#)” (password: 3r?!118E), along with [related materials](#).

# CONTENT IDEAS

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## TOPICS/ PROMPTS

→ These pieces of content can be tailored to your synagogue and shared over the course of your marketing schedule. They can also be shared via various channels, depending on your congregation's preferences.

- ◆ Clear information on where congregants can get questions answered.
- ◆ Send individual emails with content dedicated to each holiday's offerings or specific topics.

- For Example:

- Rosh Hashanah services
- Yom Kippur services
- Sukkot services
- Simchat Torah services
- Socially distant holiday meals
- Shofar blowing
- Health and safety procedures/ hygiene
- Youth and family programming
- Yizkor
- Special assistance for disabled or elderly congregants
- LGBTQ inclusion
- Technological aspects

## GRAPHICS/ PHOTOS

### → GRAPHICS AND GRAPHIC DESIGN

- ◆ There are many online tools available to help with design templates, or consider hiring a local graphic designer to help take your content and make it beautiful and exciting.

- Recommendation: [Canva](#)

### → PHOTOS

- ◆ Whenever possible, use photos from your own synagogue's archives
- ◆ Try to ensure that photos are clear, colorful, and high resolution
- ◆ Photo permissions
  - It is never permissible to simply Google a subject and copy an image off the internet if you do not have express permission to do so. Instead, either pay for stock images or find an appropriate image on a free photo site.
    - Recommendations for paid stock images: [Shutterstock](#) or [iStockPhoto](#)
    - Recommendations for free images: [Pixabay](#) or [Unsplash](#)
  - If you are using photos of individuals from your community, you must make sure you have those people's permission before you use their photos in any marketing piece, particularly if it will be used on social media or on your website.
    - This is especially important when you are using photos of children -- you must have a parent or legal guardian's [clear permission](#) to use a photo of a minor child.

# HOLIDAYS, PROGRAMMING, AND ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

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## MAHZORIM

### → Ordering Mahzor Lev Shalem

- ◆ If your synagogue needs to order Mahzor Lev Shalem, The Rabbinical Assembly is committed to offering a variety of options, including versions for families and youth. [Click here for information.](#)

### → Safer Book Handling

- ◆ For synagogues that plan on in-person services, there are concerns about safely distributing mahzorim to members while maintaining a level of hygiene. The Rabbinical Assembly has recommended resources provided by partner organizations in the world of libraries and archives which are [available here](#) (center section of page).

## YIZKOR

### → Digital Yizkor Memorial Books

- ◆ Create a digital Yizkor memorial book where congregants can make a donation and add names of loved ones.
- ◆ Allow congregants to submit names via an online form. Set up an email such as [Yizkor@abcsynagogue.com](mailto:Yizkor@abcsynagogue.com) to receive such requests.

## SHOFAR BLOWING

- ### → If it is decided that your synagogue congregants will not gather inside, you may consider offering an outdoor blowing of the shofar. Make sure to post

notifications about this important ritual on your website, social platforms, and in emails.

## SUKKOT

- If your synagogue will have a virtual Sukkot (and no in-person Sukkah decorating), consider some alternatives to that live experience.
  - ◆ Think of ways to engage your congregation virtually. For example, ask parents and children to draw and submit their ultimate Sukkah with a written description. Then display all submissions in a slideshow on your website. These types of activities serve not only to replace the traditional, in person experience, but also to further engage and foster participation among your audiences.
  - ◆ The nonprofit [Repair The World](#) has scheduled virtual sukkah events in the past and is a good resource for creative ideas and information.

## LULAV AND ETROG ORDERS

- If your synagogue will be taking lulav and etrog orders on behalf of congregants, you'll need to create an order form which includes cost, as well as payment, pick up or delivery information.
- Create and distribute [instructions](#) on how to properly wave the lulav and etrog at home. Post the instructions on your website in the High Holiday area under Sukkot.

## SIMCHAT TORAH

- If you are unable to hold Simchat Torah services in person (or even if you are) encourage parents and children to [make their own](#) Simchat Torah flags and share photos of themselves with the finished products on social media. Instruct them to tag your synagogue and to use the hashtag #SimchatTorah.

## USCJ & PARTNER ORGANIZATION RESOURCES

- Check [cjhighholidays.com](#) often for up-to-date resources from USCJ and cross movement organizations.

- ◆ [Ritual](#)
- ◆ [Education and Programming](#)
- ◆ [Finance](#)
- ◆ [Membership/Messaging](#)
- ◆ [Operations/Technology](#)
- ◆ [Reopening](#)

# FEEDBACK

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**Was this High Holidays Marketing & Communications Guide helpful to you?**

We invite you to send your feedback, comments, and questions to Mindy Gordon at [mgordon@uscj.org](mailto:mgordon@uscj.org).