

# URJ's Practices for Successful Temples, 2017

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1. **Focus on best principles (values – guiding principles), not best practices.** This keeps the central ideas behind the practices front and center. This also clarifies whether a new idea is a good fit with our culture. A focus on best practice assumes we can copy what worked from another congregation. We know this won't work, as every congregation's culture is different. Best principles allow us to learn from one another and then adapt.
2. **Embrace the sacred core purpose of congregational life.** Congregations are not businesses. We are not Jewish non-profits. While we must operate responsibly, our purpose and our relationships are much more intimate and complex than other Jewish organizations.
3. **Build sacred partnerships.** Lay leaders, clergy and professionals must work together, as no single function can address the challenges we face today. These functions are inter-dependent so collaboration here is imperative.
4. **After clarifying best principles (values & guiding principles), clarify the sacred purpose of your congregation.** What is the compelling reason we exist? What would be missed if we went away? At our core, what do we do and for whom?
5. **Attend to the human side of change; Bring congregants into the process.** Design with them, not for them. Be intentional about engaging congregants through multiple channels. This opens pathways for diverse perspectives while deepening understanding – and the likelihood of consensus - of why changes may be considered.
6. **Redefine success in conjunction with your core purpose and goals,** which will go deeper than event attendance, the budget and volunteer sign-ups.
7. **Keep your core values constant and embrace experimentation.** Try new things. Take calculated risks. Fail fast and often. Learn from experience. Learning from experience is our best way to explore possibilities. Then we can share our lessons learned and celebrate our successes.