

The Business of Social Media With JWE

By Tammy Mark

In the late days of September before entering the respite of the High Holy Days, Jewish women were hard at work. Attendees of the JWE Social Media Summit were no exception, and while many were also likely running through endless to-do lists in their heads, most of their day was spent focused on learning new ways to build their online brands and businesses.

The Jewish Woman Entrepreneur organization, JWE, was established to help empower Jewish women in business and support them in their journeys. JWE was founded by Chaya Appel-Fishman in 2011, a young entrepreneur who recognized that starting a business was daunting for many women, especially for observant women who faced additional hurdles in the workplace.



JWE Founder Chaya Appel-Fishman, Elizabeth Sutton, Deborah Friedman. (CREDIT: ESTY B PHOTOGRAPHY)

While so many women have the ideas and initiative to get a business up and running, a lack of formal business training can leave them stalled as they encounter the inevitable roadblocks. JWE is hoping to fill some of the gaps in knowledge. Aside from the larger general conference held this past May, the JWE runs smaller industry-specific events throughout the year. With social media being a very relevant component of branding, marketing and growing a business today, JWE realized that it may be a tool that many aren't yet familiar or comfortable with.

The summit featured workshops and lessons that were valuable for both service- and product-based businesses. The expert lineup included some of the women behind the most popular Jewish-run social media accounts and successful online businesses. Some are public names and familiar faces, some have pseudonyms, while others stay completely behind the scenes and utilize written content or product images only to promote their businesses. Presenters covered platforms such as image-based Instagram and the more content-based and business-focused platform of LinkedIn—yet also explained the value and flexibility of all media.

To balance a day of intense workshops, bloggers Frumee Taubenfeld and Hassidic Hipster Girl were called upon to MC and entertain the crowd and introduce the skillful presenters. Throughout the day, speakers and panelists from all fields, employing a variety of styles and methods, shared their best advice. Most of the lessons boiled down to doing what is comfortable and finding one's own voice or the brand's unique focus. The overarching message was to recognize the value of establishing and maintaining a brand's online presence in order to compete in the modern marketplace.

Event coordinator Abbey Wolin, an artist, entrepreneur and now business coach, has been involved with JWE since its early days. Wolin likens a new business to a baby and explains that everything you do has to come from the heart with love, and always with a strong focus on empathy and authenticity. Wolin chatted with Elizabeth Sutton, a fellow artist who has been showcasing her vibrant designs on Instagram as she documents the building of her lifestyle brand. Sutton advised new business owners to structure their businesses for growth from the outset, and laid out the intentional steps she took to help her business grow. As focused as she is on business, Sutton explained how she also lends her time and talent towards charities, and reminds others to do the same. "Even if you can't always be helping others, you can't only be helping yourself."

While the conference was geared towards two tracks, influencers and small business owners, the information was delivered seamlessly—at times in separate sessions and at times addressing universal topics such as maintaining integrity and authenticity. Presenters discussed customer engagement, responding to messages, ways to grow email marketing lists and how to generally get people interested and talking about your brand.



JWE Program Coordinator Abbey Wolin, Alyssa Goldwater, Breezy Schwartz, Naomi Nachman. (CREDIT: ESTY B PHOTOGRAPHY)



Gitty Berger, Shevi Samet, Rachel Tuchman, Shimi Adar, Charlene Aminoff, Danielle Renov. (CREDIT: ESTY B PHOTOGRAPHY)



Breezy Schwartz, Michal Weinstein, Melissa Lovy, Annette Cohen, Eliana Ladenheim, Esther Santer. (CREDIT: SARAH PODOLSKI PHOTOGRAPHY)

The first panel was moderated by food blogger and wellness coach Melinda Strauss, with the specific focus of how to use social media to grow business, featuring marketing expert Chaya Fischman, "Between Carpools" author Leah Schapira, Galit Winer of Kidichic and Judaic artist Yaeli Vogel. Vogel admits she was at first reticent to join the social media world but quickly realized it was part of running a business, and now shares her work and her creative process. "Social media becomes your virtual storefront. When you check in and post every day, you are saying that you are open for business."

Danielle Renov of Peas, Love and Carrots moderated the next panel on the benefits of collaboration. "Influencers" and business owners discussed best practices for putting together a clear agreement with reasonable expectations for both

parties and maintaining ethical standards throughout the process. Panelists Esther Santer, Eishestyle, Breezy Schwartz, Michal Weinstein, Esteeonline and jeweler Melissa Lovy offered advice from both sides of the equation and explained the benefits of hiring someone else to tell the story of your product. Schwartz and Weinstein, regular JWE contributors, longtime business owners and social media mavens, discussed the value of

collaboration and cross-promotion. Many of the experts, such as Santer, work with products and content that are not specific to the Jewish market and explored how to navigate different demographics.

While the summit focused on the importance of online engagement, chef and media personality Naomi Nachman emphasized the importance of face-to-face networking and shared her best tips, which were undoubtedly practiced throughout the day. Attendees had several chances to network and went home armed with new skills and new connections—as well as with gift bags from generous women-owned businesses, including some Yom Tov jewelry courtesy of Bitz of Glitz.

As the event was but a few days before Rosh Hashanah, the program concluded with a spiritual vibe and some important messages. Shimi Adar; Charlene Aminoff of Gali's Couture Wigs; Gitty Berger; educator Shevi Samet; and mental health expert Rachel Tuchman, LMHC, women who are known for spreading positivity and inspiration online, shared how they balance having a strong

online public presence with having a family, and how they grow businesses without compromising themselves. Many of these women also utilize their platforms to share Torah and other meaningful messages. With the growing knowledge of the potential downside and dangers of social media, having the chance to hear about the positive ways to utilize the tool was essential.

Berger explained how she has implemented a family rule of no phones in the bedroom. Motivational speaker and simcha dancer Adar encourages others to take breaks from both work and social media with her mantra of "drop the phone," which stresses the importance of spending focused quality time with loved ones. She adds, "If we're so busy comparing with our peers we're taking precious time from working on ourselves."

After a full day of intense focus on honing those entrepreneurial skills, Renov, who shares recipes as well as her personal journey with her followers, closed with words of Torah. Renov read from the Tomer Devorah and explained that the Torah has many lessons to teach us on how to behave in real life and online by balancing the attributes of beauty, mercy and truth.

Aminoff, a sought-out inspirational speaker and entrepreneur, sent the women off with the most apropos reminder. "Do your hishtadlut—take in everything you've learned here today," she encouraged. "However, at the end of the day, Hashem determines your success."