

President's Report 2017-2018

June 24, 2018

Accomplishments

TLL began its first year of operations in the Spring of 2017 with one 4-lecture series. In its second year (2017-2018), first and foremost, TLL honed its behind-the-scenes processes to enable a smooth and improved operation that supported two strong seasons, one with 6 lectures and one with 6 lectures plus an evening special event.

Some noteworthy accomplishments in 2017-2018 include:

- Significantly improved audiovisual, thanks to volunteer Bob Goodman
- A Private Board Area online for the purpose of making all TLL documents, surveys, minutes, processes, policies, etc easily accessible to Board members. It will also serve as a good resource for new Board members.
- A newly established Governance Committee that met once so far to decide on first steps
- Experiments with an evening lecture (very successful), a team approach by the program committee to nominating speakers (mixed results), a tweaked lecture format (now well received by most), a "come up to the mic for Q&A" format (not well received so we abandoned this).
- 7 top-notch speakers, based on survey results

The Board did not address the heterogeneity of our audience this year even though it was deemed important at our retreat last year. The Board no longer sees this as a priority. There seems to be an acceptance about whom we attract – mostly Jewish women – and "that's ok". We have, however, seen an increase in men attending from about 11% to 19%. Our audience this year is slightly older, but over 80% are still boomers (56-72 year olds). We will continue to monitor changes in our demographic.

We now have a fairly well-oiled operation, but developing an excellent lecture program – the core of our business - is still challenging. There is a determination by the Board to make this more efficient and effective. Getting more volunteers for support is seen as one key option for improvement.

Reputation and Demand

The Board believes that our reputation and success is mostly driven by:

- The quality of our speakers
- Lecture topics
- Word of Mouth (this is the only source of growth as we have done no advertising to date)
- Low cost of lectures (currently \$50 for 6 lectures)
- Customer service

The Board defines its success primarily by:

- The percentage of customers who say they will return. [In 2017-2018, 70% said "yes, definitely" and 30% said "yes, if I like the topics".] And,

- The percentage of customers who say they would very likely or somewhat likely recommend TLL to others. [*In 2017-18, 74% said “very likely” and 16% said “somewhat likely”*]

The Board is aware that we must maintain the above drivers to maintain our excellent reputation which is also reflected by the high and growing demand for our lectures. Our first season sold out in 10 days; second season in 12 hours; and 3rd season in 33 minutes. Our subscriber list has now grown to 706 people (not including ‘partners’ for some) and our capacity is 300 seats with one lecture series per season. Many people who are interested are not able to get tickets. This will likely continue if our reputation remains as good as it is. On average, we achieve 80-85% attendance per lecture.

Through The Eyes of our Customers

Our post lecture surveys provide rich statistics as well as anecdotal feedback on what our customers like, don’t like and want. Through Topic of Interest surveys, we have a good sense of what topics are preferred. Following lectures, we learn which *specific* topics they like, their reactions to speakers and if they would be interested in hearing the speaker again (and in some cases, which future topics they would prefer). In several instances, we have shared these results with other [appreciative] TAN organizations looking to vet speakers they are considering.

Top speakers (out of 13) in 2017-18 were: (*shows total % excellent + very good rating*)

Chris Patterson	98%
Adam Chapnick	98%
Mike Daley	98%
Dave Phillips	95%
Daniel Dale	87%
Arne Kislenko	82%
Dan Dunsy	81%

Speakers who the audience most want to hear again are: Patterson, Chapnick, Daley. Sally Bean and John Percy were not very well received.

Based on survey feedback, we have also built a good profile of the type of lectures our audiences prefer. We will continue to refine this over time. We learned:

- Most prefer a variety of lectures as opposed to series, but 30-40% would be interested in series as well (which means a smaller niche series could work well)
- Most feel a one hour lecture is good, with a 10 minute break and a written Q&A
- People like a combination of analytic/educational content and entertaining/lighter ones
- 95% say they come to learn new things (as opposed to getting out and socializing)
- People prefer practical content that affects them, not theoretical/academic content. They like case histories, lots of examples, things they can relate to and apply.
- They like simple graphic slides – not too many with too much information on them. Several have asked for a bigger screen placed higher for easier viewing.
- In spring 2018, people rated the variety and type of topics as a 7.4 (on a scale from 1-10)
- They say delivery is everything.

On the non program side, we have learned the importance of format, smooth registration processes, easy parking and, very important, audiovisual excellence. We only serve water with lemon and not one

customer has ever made a comment about the lack of food or coffee which the board decided early on not to serve.

The post lecture surveys also seem to engage our customers by offering them an opportunity to weigh in on the program and other aspects of TLL. We have a steady 50% response rate which is a very good rate for ongoing emailed customer satisfaction surveys. If, however, we see a drop over time, we should consider shorter surveys or surveying less frequently.

The Board Experience

We lost 4 out of 10 Board members by the end of the year – one due to other major commitments, two due to family illness and one who did not seek re-election, preferring to become a volunteer rather than a Board member. One Board member was replaced during the year, but we still have 3 vacancies at this time so this has become a priority for the Board.

Of the remaining 7 members, most (5) ‘strongly agreed’ and the rest ‘agreed’ that we currently operate in a way that:

- Respects members' strengths
- Is flexible/adaptable to members' schedules
- Listens to different points of view and tries to reach consensus
- Includes members appropriately in decision-making
- Makes decisions and gets things done
- Adapts roles/tasks to members' preferences and strengths
- Tries to be efficient so as not to waste members' time (*this was a bit less strongly endorsed*)
- Makes members feel appreciated for their work

Looking to the Future

Fortunately, of the remaining 7 Board members, 5 say they definitely enjoy being part of the board and 2 say they enjoy it for the most part. Four believe they will stay for more than 2 years and three will stay for 1-2 more years. This provides some stability for the next year, but we need to develop a list of potential board candidates that fit our needs – sooner rather than later.

As President, I believe that our product (lectures) and our Board are paramount to our continued success. Providing a satisfying experience to our customers AND our Board is critical.

As we gain confidence and skills as a Board, the sky is the limit as to what we can achieve IF the drive and interest are there. We, as a board, however, are conscious of the fact that we are young boomers with many other interests, trying to juggle and balance TLL needs with personal ones. We are developing a solid [and popular] product and will have to debate if we want to expand to meet the growing demand or to stick to the basics and just do them well. We will need to keep this in mind when we bring on new members.

Thanks so much to our Board members for their devoted, quality TLL work all year.

Submitted by Cheryl Avrich,

President

