The Ikea Effect

Chana Kanzen, April 2022

During my downtime a couple of weeks ago, I was reading *Judaism's Life Changing Ideas*, by Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks. He mentioned the behavioural economist Dan Ariely[1], who did a series of experiments on what is known as the "Ikea Effect".

Even if someone else designed the furniture - there is something about investing your labour that makes you value that item more. Ariely wanted to conclusively test this theory, so he asked volunteers to create elaborate origami models and then asked them how much they were prepared to pay for the models they made. The average answer was 25 cents. After that he showed the models to other people, and they said they were worth 5 cents. In other words, people were prepared to pay 5 times the amount of money for something they had created.

This analogy was tied into one of the reasons why God asked the Jewish people to build the mishkan, the Tabernacle, rather than just miraculously providing a ready-made model.

Rabbi Sacks' life changing lesson was "*the effort you put into something does not just change the object - it changes you. The greater the labour, the greater the love for what you have made".*

Could this have been any more apt then for our teachers during and post pandemic? Teachers who were forced to create, expand and utilise new techniques amongst multiple challenges.

The pandemic coincided with Jewish Interactive, the non-profit I lead, embarking on an ambitious journey of creating a new digital platform specifically for teachers of Jewish and Hebrew studies.

This was no easy task and, as we sat with our whiteboards and Post It stickers ready to brainstorm, we knew we needed to partner with our users.

So, we engaged Dr Shuli Gilutz Ph.D., one of the top UX advisors in the world, to conduct an extensive survey with teachers of Judaics and Hebrew Studies. We carried out 2 surveys - pre and during the pandemic, extensive interviews, and user testing.

The results of the survey are fascinating to read.

Context

The survey was posted online for 4 weeks during July 2021.

It was sent to the Ji database of teachers, as well as posted on the JEDlab group on Facebook.

- 158 teachers replied. 67% of them were from the USA.
- 70.9% use English as the main language of instruction.

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[1] Dan Ariely - the Upside of Irrationality (83-106)

- 22% use Hebrew as the main language of instruction.
- 38.6 % taught Grades 3-6.
- 60% had never used Ji apps and platforms before.
- A massive 67% had been teaching for 15 yrs+. (Another article should be focused on this!)
- 31% of the teachers were in supplementary education and 44 % were in Jewish Day schools.

Please see some their responses below:

1. **We asked teachers about their use of technology during the pandemic and how it had changed.** An overwhelming **90% of teachers** said they changed their tech use after the pandemic.
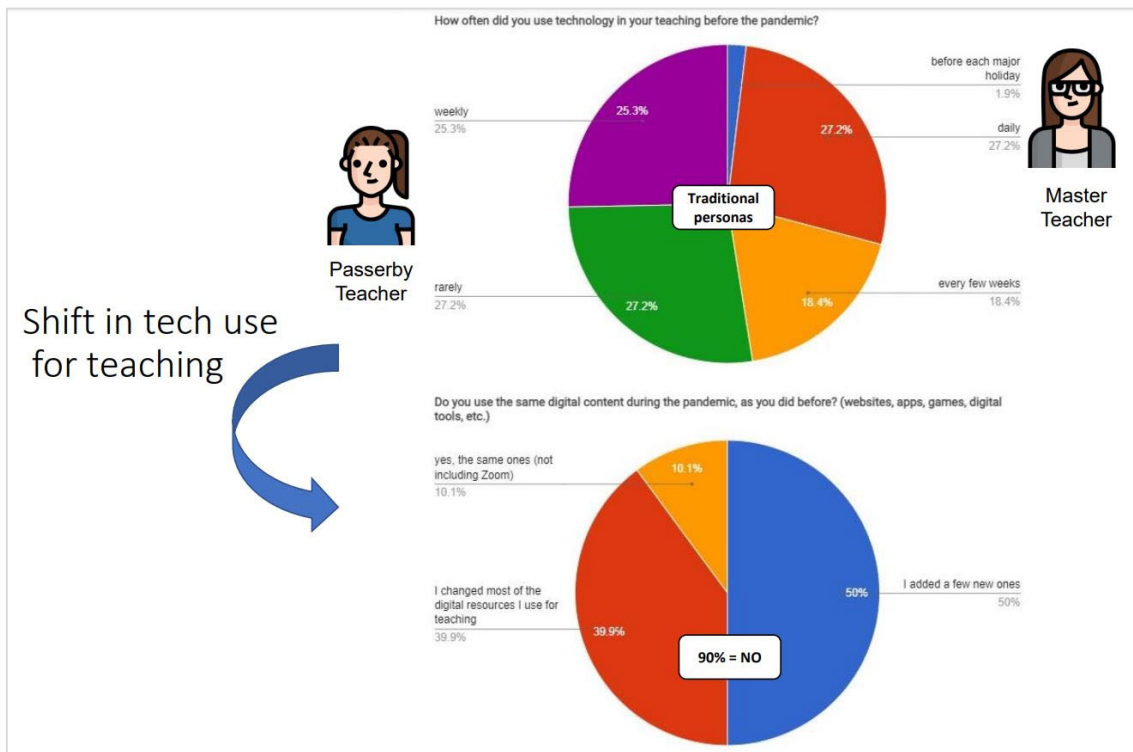
2. **What were your delight points during the pandemic?**
   - Staying home and working
   - Everybody could eat, drink and use the WC whenever they wanted
   - The kids loved Ji and I learned many new skills
   - No travel time
   - Smaller classes
   - Having the ability to teach anywhere and everywhere. Using the Ji Tap resources to augment textbooks

- Less intense on standards, more about the experience
- Immediate feedback
- Resources at your fingertips
- Being able to play games to learn
- Google Classroom was useful and efficient tool
- To find excellent and attractive material just as the level of my students
- Being able to offer more differentiated instruction
- It was very easy to do a flipped classroom.
- Students became better independent learners
- Becoming an online community
- Being welcomed into the student's homes
- Being able to get children to work independently
- It was great to see the students succeed despite all of the challenges
- Personal interaction with kids online
- Kids were much more appreciative of spending time together in person
- Seeing them become more confident as on-line contributors
- Getting to know students differently
- That the children could share more about their home life
- The students could study on their own at their own pace with my guidance
- Having families helping children during class
- Students who were shy and didn't talk in person became more talkative online.
- Being able to invite guests to join the class -grandparents, parents, siblings, dogs
- Anonymous student questions in private chat - There were some kids who would type insightful comments into the chat who may not have raised their hand to say those comments in person
- Knowing that parents got to hear the hard work I put into teaching
- Prayer karaoke
- The Mute option!

3. **When we asked about some of the challenges, some of the most popular responses were**:
   - Learning how everything worked and finding all the websites that would be useful
   - Having to make time to find tools and trying to discern which tools are most effective
   - Zoom fatigue - some students stopped coming because of this
   - Keeping students focus
   - Lack of social interaction
   - IT limitations - internet connections /wifi
   - Online education was not suitable for kindergarten age
   - Hybrid sessions didn't work - having some in person and some online was challenging

4. **We asked teachers what some of the strategies were that they used for dealing with the challenges of online school**:
   - Planning ahead
   - Shorter lessons
   - Staying calm and also humour
   - Letting students know that it's OK to make mistakes
   - Good communication with parents
   - Allowing social time online
   - Giving super clear instructions
   - Give students more freedom to seek out their own tools and learn so students feel they are being proactive about their education

5. **We asked teachers to share some specific teaching strategies that they were successful with:**
   - Break out rooms
   - Video and web links within the curriculum
   - Teaching using games
   - Use the chat function
   - Ask students for "help"
   - Students to create/post own projects
   - Gamifying content
   - Use of Mixing media sources- Discussions. videos, questionnaires

6. As we were building a new platform at the time, **we asked teachers what they wanted from digital tools in the future** and divided them into technology specific, content specific and platform specific.

   Tech-specific requirements:

   - Better connectivity is key
   - Tools that don't require high bandwidth
   - A platform where the children cannot say that something didn't load or that they couldn't log in.

   A major factor in the pandemic was simply the lack of wifi connectivity - something schools and families have started to invest in to ensure better access in the future. Logging in was also a huge barrier to entry, with students forgetting passwords and taking up teacher's time trying to access content.

   Content-specific requirements:

   - We need platforms designed for instruction and not just to solidify knowledge
   - More Jewish content for existing programs with open libraries

- Tools that students can access easily without reading/writing
- Age-appropriate content

Platform specific requirements:

- I would like to find everything in the same place. The material must be perfectly classified by age and by the students' native language. In addition, it is necessary that it be a material that carries a constructive sequence introducing the new concepts with the bases of what has already been learned. In other words, sequentially.
- I want a Modular platform - to be able to pull out different pieces as needed.
- I would like the ability to group activities into subjects, an outline with the types of activities listed.
- It needs to have flexibility and the ability to be individualized.
- Leveling.
- I want an easy way to share resources with other teachers.
- Clearer instructions for those who need it. Someone to demonstrate slowly how the tool works.
- We need more support and information.
- To be more user friendly. To help me plan my learning journey and to add more creative easy tools to achieve that goal.
- Easy access, easy to use, quick success.
- Assessment tools.

We studied these answers and then worked with teachers hard over the past 18 months in combination with some of the top developers, UX and UI teams and pedagogical experts to create JIGZI.

Jigzi's focus is "Learning Through Creation"

We have empowered our teachers to create and search for content that is specific to their needs, whilst uncompromising on ease of access, usability and operability. Use of advanced AI technology and a unique backend filtering system, means that teachers can find content that is right for them whatever their needs, language, age, subject. And if teachers can't find the exact content they want, they can create content using some of the most advanced Hebrew text tools on any platform, in easy steps.

We called the platform Jigzi as its main focus is to create **JIG**s - **J**ewish **I**nteractive **G**ames and the 'Jigglings' are our characters who help those who may be uncomfortable along their creation journey.

Jigzi, a free open-source platform, has been a labour of love with our team working tirelessly during the pandemic, behind the scenes, as Covid intensely magnified the absolute importance of this mission.

Ji was established in 2012. After 10 years in the field, Ji saw our teacher heroes over the past two years, listened to their struggles, learnt from their innovation and, together with our

heroes, we have created a solution. JIGZI.org (Beta - there is still a huge amount to come over the next 2 years) is now live.

After all, according to the late Rabbi Sacks:

"If you want people to value something, get them to participate in creating it. Give them a challenge and give them responsibility. The effort we put into something does not just change the object it changes us, the greater the labour, the greater the love. The greatest gift we can give someone is to give them the chance to create. This is the one gift that turns the recipient into a giver. It gives them dignity. It shows that we trust them, have faith in them and believe they are capable of great things."

We now invite all of you to participate in creating Jigzi - to create in turn for others.

We hope you love it as much as we do.

Chana Kanzen is the CEO of Jewish Interactive - a global non-profit whose mission is to provide high quality Jewish education to any child, anytime, anywhere.