

[EXCLUSIVE] AMI JOINS PRESIDENT TRUMP ON HIS EUROPEAN TRIP

Ami

M A G A Z I N E

**A TRIP INTO
THE TUNNELS OF
BAR KOCHBA**

**WAS SHE
TO BLAME FOR
HER SUFFERING?**

**THE
KIDNAPPING
OF THE
ABARBANEL'S
GRANDSON**

**DID PUTIN
CON BIBI?**

**EXCLUSIVE
INTERVIEW**

I Was Hitler's Neighbor

THE JEW WHO LIVED NEXT TO THE MONSTER

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CHAIM TKATCH

COMPANY: Ayzertech Public Adjusters

AGE
47

HEADQUARTERS
Detroit, Michigan

INDUSTRY
Public Adjuster

ESTABLISHED
2013

EMPLOYEES
19



Chaim Tkatch is a public adjuster, and his job is to help you get the most out of your insurance claim.

After growing a painting company until it was worth tens of millions of dollars and watching it nearly fold, and after a fire broke out in his home,

Chaim discovered the public adjusting industry.

"I was born in Detroit and have lived here most of my life. After high school, I learned in Yeshiva Gedolah Ateres Mordechai here in Detroit. I went to college at night and got my bachelor's degree in history. I wanted to be a lawyer and was planning on going to law school.

"I worked for a summer in a law firm, and after that experience I couldn't imagine spending the rest of my life doing legal work. I decided at that point to pursue an MBA program. I enjoyed business, especially the money management aspect.

"My first job after college was at a meat processing plant in Detroit. They hired me to do strategic planning, analyzing competitors' practices and figuring out ways to get ahead. I ended up leaving that job after a year or so and took a job in a unionized painting company, Simon Watt LLC. I was hired as the controller. Over the nine years I was there, I worked my way up to CFO and helped bring their sales up to \$35 million dollars.

"We were doing well until we got a large carpentry and painting job in Washington, DC. It was a very large job and they shorted us \$20 million. Not having the money in our pockets put us in trouble with many jobs. In that industry, you work for 30 days and you bill, and then they pay you 30 days later. We eventually got the money from them, but it almost put us out of business.

"At just the same time, I had an electrical fire in my house. I was at a loss about how to handle the insurance claim. Someone recommended that I use a public adjuster to help me with the claim. It was the first time I had heard of such a concept. The adjuster did an amazing job and got me more money than I could have imagined—but I felt there were areas where he could have done better. On top of that, I thought the entire process could have been handled more smoothly using technology, so I decided to fill that space.

"Let me give you a little background. Whenever someone files a claim with an insurance company for, say, fire or water damage, the insurance company will hire an adjuster to work on the claim. The adjuster represents the company's interests during the claim process, not the insured person's. A public adjuster, on the other hand, works for the person making the claim.

"If it's a small claim, the insurance company will generally take your word for it on the amount of damage. But on a claim of at least several thousand dollars, how you present your claim makes all the difference in the world. Most people who are filing a claim only consider the immediate damage and the money needed to fix it. A public adjuster is better able to figure out how to list the damages and also how to determine if there is more damage than the average homeowner would notice.

"All states have laws that regulate and license public adjusters. Homeowners who retain a public adjuster are authorizing him to negotiate on their behalf with the insurance company; the adjuster is sort of like a lawyer for insurance claims. There are laws that govern insurance claims, and as long as you provide reason and proof for your claim, it's hard for them to dis-

BY NESANEL GANTZ

agree with us; they generally agree with our assessment. In a case of major disagreement, we go to appraisal, and we generally do well there, too.

“Public adjusters generally take a fee of ten percent of the final claim (less in larger cases), but since they can get three to four times what the customer would get on his own, the customer is still way ahead.

“When I became a certified public adjuster, I reached out to some friends of mine about utilizing technology to make this process easier. Two of my partners are technology whizzes. They work on technology to streamline the process and help run the business better. My third partner has a lot of connections in the real-estate

world. As most of our business relies on word of mouth, his connections help.

“We started to grow the business slowly. We hired a few more public adjusters, as well as a team to deal with the technicalities of the insurance companies and related businesses. *Baruch Hashem*, we all get along great and are good friends. However, we each stick to what we know best. My partners are focused on technology, I’m focused on the actual public adjustment, and our fourth partner is in charge of the bulk of the marketing.

“We called the company Ayzertech because that’s one of our core values—to help others as much as we can. *Ayzer* means to help in Hebrew.”

What was your first entrepreneurial venture?

I remember when I was in the second grade, my mother made me a lox sandwich, and I didn’t like it. But a kid in my class did, so I sold it to him. The next day I told my mother that I absolutely loved lox sandwiches and asked her to make me two. When I was a kid, I always envisioned myself as being an entrepreneur, although I wasn’t that much of a risk-taker. I didn’t do the whole lawn-mowing thing, but I always thought that one day I wanted to run a business.

How do you get insurance companies to agree to your assessment of the damage?

Good question. Again, I come back to the lawyer analogy. If you know the laws of the insurance world, you can work within them.

I have dealt with many insurance reps, and they know me. I run into the same people over and over again. If you are honest, people want to work with you, and you can get the job done. Also, *baruch*

Hashem, I am good at what I do. Dentistry isn’t a science, it’s an art, and the same is true of public adjusting.

What are some unique issues you face in this industry?

Many *Yidden* tell me, “It’s my fault, so how can I make a claim?” But that’s what insurance is for! If mistakes weren’t covered, insurance companies would rarely have to pay a claim.

Another thing many people are afraid of is that their premium will go up if they make a claim. That’s generally not the case. And even if it does—for example, if you have three claims in five years—that won’t make it go up ridiculously. And if it does, the money you should recover from your claim will outweigh the potential increase in your premium.

What is the first thing someone should do after a fire or flood?

The first thing is make sure you are safe. Your valuables aren’t as valuable as your life. I have been involved in too many horror stories. Trust me—safety first.



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Assuming everyone is safe, take as many pictures and videos of everything as you can. Visual evidence of the incident is the most important thing to have when making a claim. Don't speak to the insurance company before speaking to a public adjuster; you might say something that can make things difficult for you down the road.

We once had someone who had a sewer back-up, and he called the insurance company to report a flood in

“Take as many pictures and videos of everything as you can. Visual evidence is the most important thing to have when making a claim.”



Nesanel Gantz and Chaim Tkatch

his basement. Later they didn't want to pay because the man had said it was a flood, not a back-up. We won the case, but it makes things harder.

Finally, be very wary of people who offer to help you with your claim and do the work as well. We aren't involved in the repairs, and a repair person can't possibly work with you in an unbiased way on your claim.

Do you believe public adjusting is a good career?

Yes, absolutely. It's a growing field. Whether you are a public adjuster for the client or an insurance adjuster for the insurance company, you can be successful. I believe a key to success is a willingness to learn new things and a willingness to learn from others. I will add that you can really change people's lives for the better. During what is generally a very trying time, you can bring a bit of *simchah* into their lives.

How do you get people to think about calling your company when the possibility of filing an insurance claim arises?

The biggest issue in our business is making ourselves known to people. But at the end of the day, it's all based on word of mouth. I think this applies to any business similar to ours, like plumbing, for example. Doing a good job is the best marketing.

One of our jobs is convincing people they need a public adjuster. A key for me is making myself available to people for advice even after a claim has been filed. In general, if you have proof that your damage is due to the original incident, you can make a claim later on, as long as you let the insurance company know about the original incident on time.

We recently had a claim for someone who had damage ten years earlier. I always tell people that it doesn't cost to call me at the time it happens.

Do you ever contact people after a fire or flood?

I generally won't do that. My goal is for people to know about us and the work we do, and then call us when it's applicable. It's definitely a challenge. I have a radio show every week, and that brings us solid business.

I will share a tip that worked for me and applies to many businesses—free advice. I am always willing to talk to people and give them advice about how they can recover more money or what they should have done differently.

If that's the case, do you ever have people call you for advice and then go file the claim on their own?

Would you call a doctor about whether to have an operation and then do it yourself? Public adjusting is literally a full-time job. There are too many aspects to this job for a person to do it by himself.

Do you recommend or discourage people from using certain insurance companies?

I'm glad you asked me that question. I generally won't give specific recommendations, but I can say that having a good insurance policy is a sound investment. There are definitely differences among companies in how they handle a claim and how they handle their customers. Use an insurance company that your friend has had

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Is it important to use a public adjuster for commercial claims?

Absolutely. It's even more important to have a public adjuster for a commercial claim. The policies are not as standardized, and there are many more available benefits and potential complications. Commercial claims have a higher incidence of subrogation investigations and have stricter time lines for proof of loss, which means that you really need to have all of your information arranged quickly and understand the intricacies of the policy requirements.

How do you deal with stress in your life?

To be honest with you, up until two years ago, I was much more stressed-out than I am today; the stress was eating me up. Two years ago, I took up running and it's been a huge *brachah*. I find it stressful to deal with other *Yidden's* money; it's a big responsibility.

What is your best money-management advice?

It sounds simple, but it's this: Manage the cash flow. You can have two people making the same amount of money, but one is flourishing and one is struggling. For example, if you live with credit cards, don't make a large purchase a day before the card closes. Be cognizant of what you are really spending on things. Budget. Manage your money.

What is the biggest mistake you've made in business, and what did you learn from it?

It's a little embarrassing, but if people can learn from it, I'll share it. When I first started my career as a public adjuster, I don't want to say I was very pompous, but I was confident. The first few times I had to deal with the adjuster hired by the insurance company, I came on full force, confident in my assessment, making sure they knew I was right and that I would get my way. Because of my behavior, the cases took longer, extending recovery times for my clients. I didn't realize at the time that we both had the same interests in mind—doing our job correctly and closing the claim as fast as possible.

Even when you are on opposite sides of the aisle, you really have to give the other side respect. It's similar to the way lawyers try to work with each other during a case. You have to treat everyone with respect at all times, even if you seem to be working for different sides.

Is being Jewish a hindrance when it comes to working with wealthy non-Jewish clients?

I think it comes to this: Being *frum* is not a hindrance today. On the contrary, when they see that you are genuine, they cherish that and it's a tremendous *kiddush Hashem*. That's our goal. ●

New NYC Employment Law In Effect July 18!

The "Temporary Schedule Change" law, effective July 18, is one every New York City business owner should know about!

Employees can now request 2 temporary work changes per year—each change lasting one business day—for specific personal events. If an employee uses 2 days for one request, the employer has fulfilled both requests for the year.

Basically, this law covers the sorts of personal events (mostly "after the fact" emergencies) that may suddenly come up in an employee's life (or that of a person in their care). In the past, to get approved time off or other work adjustments at such short notice might've been awkward or even resulted in a penalty to the worker.

But now, qualifying employees get the 2 days "covered" for these events, which they can use as a paid sick day, unpaid leave, or a temporary change in hours & work location. All they need to do is retroactively request in writing the temporary work change option within 2 days after returning to work.

As an employer, you have to respond to the employee's request within 14 days, and indicate whether you've accepted the request, will accept a modified version, or have denied it. Failure to comply with this new law is a \$500 penalty per violation.

For the full scope of temporary work options, qualifying cases, and guidelines for you to proceed, we recommend you consult the NY Department of Labor, a lawyer, or our extended article on the Fingercheck blog.

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