



Jewish Leadership in North America – Changes in Personnel and Structure

Introduction

Everything the Jewish people hope to achieve depends on the quality of the professionals and volunteers who serve our organizations and on senior leaders in particular. The ability to shape the internal dynamics of the Jewish people and influence the external ones relies on these individuals' vision, passion, knowledge, skill and influence and on the quality and vitality of our institutions and communities. The continuous development of high quality leaders and human resources, in sufficient numbers, is fundamental and imperative for the continued thriving of the Jewish people. Leadership expert Frances Hesselbein said, "It's not great strategies. It's great people."

Without discounting the enormous achievements of the past and present; two critical questions concern the North American Jewish community, with critical implications for the global Jewish people. Will it successfully replenish an aging senior professional leadership corps, many of whom will soon retire? And, will their replacements, as well as new volunteer and informal leaders, possess the vision, passion and skill to reshape the American communal infrastructure to successfully adapt to changing realities and respond to external threats? These questions are embedded in larger and long-standing concerns about the overall quantity and quality of professionals and volunteers and the ability to engage young adult volunteers. Success will require an immediate program of executive development, implementation of best-practice human resource management, and thoughtful cultivation of Jewish influentials and informal leaders.



The title “Jewish leader” is poorly defined and frequently misapplied. It may refer to officers and members of governing boards, CEOs and senior staff. Individuals just beginning their organizational journeys are often called “young leaders.”

However, position, authority and leadership are not synonymous. Leadership implies the ability to define and articulate vision, inspire others, acquire influence and power to bring about change, shape outcomes and get things done. Effective leadership must be built on, but transcend, sound management. Jewish leadership may reside in formal positions or informally in major donors, Jewish foundations or prominent, influential Jews.¹²

This paper seeks to assess the state of North American Jewish leadership, identify major challenges and offer policy recommendations, strategies and interventions.

- There are an estimated 9500 Jewish nonprofits in the United States.³
- This paper will address the challenge of professional leadership transition in the largest and most influential Jewish organizations in a manner that responds to the changing nature of Jewish life in North America. This includes large national organizations such as American Jewish Committee and Hillel, the major seminaries and Jewish religious movements, the largest Federations, Jewish Community Centers, congregations and others.
- It will define an ideal profile for the next generation of top professionals and assess the ability to fill those positions in the next five to ten years.
- It will consider volunteer leadership and assess the Jewish community’s “soft power” resources - Jewish individuals active in political life, government service, public affairs, media and academia.
- It will offer a systemic framework for how the North American Jewish community can manage its long term professional leadership needs.



The paper draws on Jewish and general nonprofit research, writing and telephone interviews with a diverse group of 34 individuals, active in Jewish affairs.

Despite the many impressive people working in the Jewish community and their myriad accomplishments, there is a widespread and long-standing concern, even alarm among some, about the overall leadership of the North American Jewish community:

- General concern about the quantity and quality of Jewish leadership, volunteer and professional, in terms of Jewish literacy, commitment, and management skill, as well as vision, responsiveness and innovation to cope with changing realities.
- Distress about the ability to engage new young volunteer leaders.
- Long-standing concern about the ability to recruit and retain top quality Jewish professionals, with special concerns about Jewish education, fundraising and executive leadership.
- Growing alarm about the ability to replace an aging cohort of chief executives, particularly at the largest or most influential organizations.

The Leadership Cliff

In a 2009 report, published by the Jewish Funders Network, researchers Michael Austin and Tracey Salkowitz warned, “The National Jewish community appears to be on the edge of a precipice. Within the next five to ten years, the baby boomers will retire and leave upwards of 75%–90% of Jewish community agencies with the challenge of finding new executive leadership. The field of Jewish communal service is vastly different today from the post-Holocaust creation of the State of Israel when hundreds of young Jews decided to dedicate their professional lives to the Jewish community. When this reality is combined with the rapid technological advances, the professionalization of the field, the increasing demands of community executives and the rapidly changing needs and culture of the Jewish community, the challenges are monumental and uncharted.”⁴



This concern has been articulated often; most recently in a 2012 proposal by Larry Moses, President Emeritus of the Wexner Foundation, for a national Center for Executive Development.⁵ A Jewish Communal Service Association study found an overwhelming lack of succession planning by Jewish organizations. The great majority of interviewees shared the concern.⁶

The 2008 economic crisis likely slowed the pace of retirements. However, the issue is imbedded in a wider professional leadership challenge facing American nonprofits. A widely cited 2006 Bridgespan study estimated that by 2016, the nonprofit sector (10.1% of the U. S. workforce) would need to produce 80,000 new senior managers per year, 2.4 times the current demand.⁷ Other studies sound the alarm.⁸ 22.5% of nonprofit CEOs are age 60 or older and 36% of them expect to stay on the job less than three years.⁹ Although the average U. S. retirement age has risen to 67, more than 50% of current CEOs expect to retire by age 65.¹⁰

Moreover, the Chronicle of Philanthropy reported that half of chief fundraisers plan to leave their jobs within two years. 40% contemplate leaving fundraising entirely.¹¹ The paucity of skilled fundraisers is exacerbated by an average six month vacancy period. With the growing expectation that CEO's possess strong fundraising skills: chief development officers are logical candidates for succession to the executive suite.

Additionally, many senior executives (non-CEO's) in larger Jewish organizations are also approaching retirement and are therefore unlikely to seek or be sought for the top spot.¹²



A Changing Context

Leading large complex organizations, which are dependent on philanthropy and sustained Board support, is very hard work, demanding numerous advanced skills. However, those who will assume the top professional positions also face a Jewish and general context far different than that which welcomed the incumbents. The trends and factors are well documented. They include full integration in secular society, Israel's strength and complex U. S. relationship, dramatic changes in demography, sociology and patterns of identity and affiliation; changes in the philanthropic marketplace; declining confidence in non-profits; shifting attitudes and priorities toward Israel, Jewish security, social services and Jewish identity; and the rapidly changing, globalized, technology-dependent world. Many of these trends represent long-term threats to the vitality of the North American Jewish community, and in turn, world Jewry. Some afford new opportunities.

There is continual speculation about the relevance and sustainability of the current Jewish organizational network. There are frequent calls for and some progress in re-structuring including mergers, sun setting organizations, redefining the mission of others, creating new institutions and overall programmatic innovation. Nonetheless, even as change occurs, for the foreseeable future it is likely that the largest, most complicated, best resourced and influential organizations will still tend to be mainstream.

Because of the changing context and concerns about the quality of current leaders, many people may welcome large-scale executive transition, despite the accompanying costs and disruptions. The rapid pace of change may challenge the long-valued goal of executive stability. Rabbi Mark Charendoff, on stepping down as President of the Jewish Funders Network, wrote that executive turnover should be encouraged, positing a target of 8-10 years on average.¹³



Given these factors and growing debate about the needs and best structure of the Jewish community, the next CEOs will have to straddle a difficult line. They will need to understand and master the existing context, while simultaneously responding to, envisioning and leading institutional change. There will be many obstacles. The need for change is not universally accepted. The issues are complex and solutions to communal ailments are not readily apparent. Volunteers, donors, and staff will cling to old ways, defend power and resource allocations. Executive power is limited by volunteer governance. Day to day pressures will crowd out time and resources for working on change, which is usually slow and process heavy.

The Desired Professional Profile

There are at least two ways to define the desired professional profile. One starts from an analysis of the role, organizational needs and environmental context and then specifies the knowledge, competencies, experience, values and personal attributes required to succeed. These should build on evidence from contemporary management and leadership research. A second approach is defined by the expectations and perspectives of those doing the hiring. Regrettably, these two approaches do not always align. Selection criteria are affected by generational differences, gender and religious perspective. They are frequently reactive to assessments of the incumbent. Common areas of tension include those who believe extensive experience in the field is critical versus those who seek non-traditional candidates with fresh perspectives and skills; those who see business, management and fundraising skills as supreme and those who seek Jewish literacy and vision for the Jewish people. Younger volunteers, particularly entrepreneurs, will likely reject the profile of retiring CEOs and the perspective of older volunteers; seeing them as sustaining the status quo. These tensions call for extremely careful attention to the composition and process of executive search committees. Special attention must be given to the voices of younger, next generation volunteers, if the capacity for institutional change is to be fostered.



The majority of interviewees do not believe there is one best trajectory to the CEO office, advocating openness to multiple pathways. Yet, although each job requires a unique combination of qualifications; the interviews and management literature point to the following ideal criteria for the next CEOs. In general the criteria also apply to Rabbis:

- Desire and ability to truly lead, built around a forward-looking vision, passion, personal empowerment, courage, perseverance, interpersonal and communications skills and the ability to inspire others. This must be coupled with humility. Changing cultural expectations and the reality that many challenges are adaptive, call for greater use of servant, distributed and shared leadership models. The next CEOs must maintain a careful balance between being strong, empowered leaders on one hand, and collaborative, empowering leaders on the other.
- A personally meaningful Jewish life and commitment to Jewish values, Jewish Peoplehood and Israel's security.
- Jewish knowledge including the demographics, sociology and operation of the North American Jewish community, contemporary knowledge of Israel, world Jewry and the global Jewish agenda. Highly desirable is literacy in Jewish religious thought, classic texts, Hebrew language and cross-cultural competence to relate to Israeli and global Jewish leaders.
- Respect for the variety of Jewish expressions and support for pluralistic policy. Individuals in their 40's, able to understand, communicate, motivate and build relationships with diverse constituencies in their 20's to 40's.
- Collaborative boundary spanners, who will emphasize broad concerns and community building rather than institutional preservation.
- Willingness and skill in fundraising and long-term donor cultivation and stewardship.
- Strategic management skills, with particular emphasis on financial and human resource management, change management and board governance. Alternatively, the ability to build a supportive, skilled management team.



- Nuanced understanding and skill in managing lay – professional relations, which includes respect for the imperative of volunteer governance and commitment to empower effective boards.
- Skill and commitment to develop and empower high-quality, collaborative teams, with attention to preparing their own successors.
- Flexibility, adaptability, creativity, openness and a spirit of innovation and entrepreneurship. Openness to interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary thinking.

Of course, no one candidate will possess everything. Essentials include Jewish vision, passion and energy, interpersonal, team building and fundraising skills and the ability to master lay-professional relations.

Quality of the Pipeline

“If you’re not developing your ‘high potentials,’ you’re going to pay for it later and the cost is going to be a lot more than you think.”

- *Dr. Marshall Goldsmith*

The notion of pipeline implies high quality middle managers, working their way to the top, with the requisite training, experience and qualifications to ultimately enter the executive suite. Most believe the pipeline is weak. Austin & Salkowitz found that although about 25% of current CEOs could identify “up and coming stars,” the vast majority don’t know where their successors will come from.¹⁴ This impacts the immediate question of executive succession, as well as concerns about the overall quality of the Jewish professional workforce. Exceptions of greater confidence were noted in New York City, within the Orthodox community, and in the ability to fill top positions in Jewish public affairs. Nonetheless, most individuals interviewed could identify several “rising stars.” A cursory look at their bios indicates that most possess advanced education, several with PhDs and a long record of Jewish engagement. Several were interviewed. They generally expressed self-confidence and readiness, though some noted ambivalence about their desire.



Many believe the concept of a pipeline is antiquated, unrealistic and reinforces the status quo. They believe the Jewish community must cast a wider net, looking at high quality individuals with Jewish knowledge and passion from other non-profit and public sector settings, noting business and law in particular. All acknowledge that these individuals face barriers to entry, will require training, mentoring and coaching and will face serious adjustments to the realities and demands of Jewish organizational life, most particularly the lay-professional relationship. Most see the transition from committed lay person to professional as the hardest and most likely to fail. As one interviewee put it, "Good professionals make it look easy. Then they discover it isn't."

Recent studies find strong motivations among young people to enter mission-oriented professions. Sometimes disillusioned with business or reduced opportunities in law, combined with a commitment to social justice, the 2008 "Ready to Lead" study of nearly 6000 young people, exposed to the nonprofit world, found 32% aspire to be a nonprofit CEO and 47% say their ideal job is in non-profit sector.¹⁵

In the Jewish world, some such young people have entered the entrepreneurial, innovation sector, starting organizations addressing Jewish education, identity, art, culture, public affairs and communal change. Though young, they display many of the characteristics defined in the ideal profile and are a potential, long range, though possibly overlooked talent pool. However, they will need to be nurtured and will demand significant changes in the nature of the lay-professional partnership and work-life balance, if they are to take mainstream organization roles.



Contributing Factors

The leadership cliff results from numerous factors relating to demand and supply. Research has given us a vivid picture of personnel issues within the Jewish community.¹⁶ Additional insights are extrapolated from secular research.

Factors affecting demand

Despite the economic crisis of 2008, the nonprofit sector continues to expand in number and size.¹⁷ A similar dynamic likely exists in the Jewish community, with the exception of the Rabbinate, where demand may be shrinking.¹⁸ Growth there may come from small entrepreneurial start ups and the foundation sector. Larger organizations require more senior executives, who might otherwise serve as CEOs in smaller organizations. Even if the number of organizations holds constant, the successor generation to the baby boom CEOs is numerically smaller.

CEO tenures in the corporate world are decreasing from 9.5 years average to 7.6 years. Poor performance creates demand as 40% of CEO's fail in the first 18 months.¹⁹ 30% of nonprofit CEOs are fired or forced to resign.²⁰ Younger, entrepreneurial lay leaders often express concern about the skill sets of current older CEOs. Stories abound about forced separations.

Factors affecting supply

Though demographic factors, such as the smaller post baby boom population cohort, play a role, factors primarily relate to changing Jewish identity and affiliation and overall weak human resource practices.

The Jewish nonprofit environment is widely seen as less than optimal and frequently described as toxic to professional recruitment, development, retention and career. Few Jewish organizations would win "best places to work" awards. Factors identified in the literature and anecdotally include:



- Jobs are harder. Most senior professionals report that factors including communal changes, increasing fundraising pressure and competition, increasingly complex issues, organizations and regulation, and challenging or toxic lay-professional relations are increasing stress and frustration.
- Poor screening and hiring practices.
- Unrealistic work-loads and performance expectations.
- Low tolerance for failure.
- Limited, inadequate or unsupportive supervision. It is often said people don't leave jobs, they leave supervisors.
- Limited quality and quantity of in-service training.
- Lack of support for career development.
- Lack of recognition and respect.
- Insufficient compensation in early career stages.
- Limited use of maternity leave, flex time, job sharing and other strategies to accommodate working parents and enhance work-life balance.
- Disincentives and barriers to women's career advancement.
- Perception among many young people that mainstream Jewish organizations resist change, focus only on fundraising and are technologically unsophisticated.

These push factors diminish the attractiveness of professional careers and are reinforced by pull forces. For example, competent fundraisers often find they can earn more in other settings, with less stress. Young women often exit within two to three years when they marry or begin families. Push factors are salient to the millennial generation, who expect to change jobs frequently, have little patience for advancement and do not contemplate a career limited to one type of organization.²¹



A large, widely noted, factor is reduced mobility. With dual earner families, fewer employees are prepared to move for opportunity. Canadian communities find it difficult to recruit American candidates. Those working in small and mid-size communities and unable to move, find few opportunities for advancement (or fear reprisal if they look) and seek career advancement in secular settings.

Schools of Social Work and Jewish Communal Service are producing only a small number of people.²² High cost, long-term, professional development programs have received mixed reviews. An ambitious program oriented to young beginning workers closed for lack of funding. Professional organizations are weak and most in-service training is of the one day nature, generally under-resourced and of mixed quality.

Impact of Jewish identity

With reduced levels of affiliation and loyalty to traditional institutions, interfaith marriage, and growing discomfort with Israeli policies, it is less likely that young Jews will proactively seek a career in a Jewish organization.

Yet there is also evidence of significant interest among young Jews in developing new programs and organizations related to Jewish education, social justice, religious life public affairs and community. Many interviewees point to the innovation sector as a place filled with passion and talent, and a potential source of future top leaders. However, these talented, motivated young Jews generally do not wish to work in traditional organizations. And, some older leaders view them as unlikely or unsuitable candidates. In fact one highly prominent and respected social entrepreneur expressed great surprise that no one from a mainstream organization had reached out about a possible career move. His experience echoed that of a current top CEO.



Whether or not today's young entrepreneurs will eventually become more comfortable in mainstream organizations is conjectural. What does seem likely is that capitalizing on their talents will require active outreach, nurturance and significant changes in the structure, operation, leadership style and working culture of the target organizations.

The Shoah, Israel, and anti-Semitism were powerful motivations for current CEO's. Changes in identity and attitudes raise the possibility that those attracted to professional roles will increasingly be drawn from the more religiously traditional. Does this potentially limit their ability to engage an increasingly secular population?

Institutional inertia

There is strong evidence that current CEO's and their boards have avoided or failed to address the executive cliff and the larger challenge of effective human resource management. Few organizations have undertaken formal succession planning, either long term or emergency, despite common wisdom that this is a basic leadership responsibility and management best practice. Transitions are generally unplanned and poorly managed.²³

Non-profit realities such as limited budgets, lack of associate directors and few intermediaries hamper pro-active succession planning and mean non-profits are far less likely to develop talent and hire from within.²⁴

Economic and emotional issues may lead CEOs and boards to avoid facing succession. Noble (2012) outlines some of the complex feelings aroused by the subject:

- CEO's belief that "my work isn't done."
- Lack of confidence that a successor exists.
- CEO's belief that they should control their time of departure.
- Lack of personal planning for next phase of life.



- CEO fear of becoming lame duck or being forced out if they raise subject of retirement.²⁵

Why have we failed to address the coming crisis?

A decade ago, David Edell, a former Jewish professional and leading search consultant, issued a call to action, stating, “We know a great deal about the personnel crisis, but have lacked the will to address the problem on a system-wide scale. This crisis will affect the Jewish community's ability to realize its potential. Its resolution requires the commitment of top volunteer and professional leadership.” He repeated his warning in July of 2012.²⁶ It has been echoed in the larger nonprofit world.²⁷

There are real costs to this failure. Most Jewish organizations are already stressed to maintain perceived relevance, impact and financial sustainability. Failure to secure high quality personnel can trigger a vicious cycle of organizational decline. Poorly planned, avoided, or unforeseen executive transitions can trigger:

- Instability and reduced impact.
- Exodus of key staff and poor morale.
- Reduced fundraising.
- Tarnished image of the professional.
- Excessive concentration of power in a long-serving CEO, which can also discourage competent employees.
- Abandonment of loyal executives after a lifetime of service.

Yet, despite repeated warnings and collective hand-wringing, the Jewish community has not addressed the personnel matter vigorously. At times it has been negligent. Why?



Matters of internal organizational capacity and infrastructure are often accorded little value and attention by governing boards. They are categorized as overhead. In a climate of increasing needs, limited revenues, skeptical donors and charity watchdogs, the ratio of overhead to program expense is under immense scrutiny. These are strong disincentives to use unrestricted funds for training, coaching, sabbaticals etc.

Either from fear of intruding on the CEO's domain or due to executive resistance, Boards often have little insight into employee matters. They often fail to adequately set expectations and evaluate their chief executives. Even when they do, personnel management is rarely a key criterion.

Excepting several forward thinking philanthropists, professional development is not an attractive option for donors considering supplementary or planned gifts.

An adaptive problem requiring a systemic response

The immediate challenge of CEO succession results from and is embedded in a broader set of human resource issues. The extent of the problem, the multiplicity of factors and the degree of dysfunction mean that short term technical or individual strategies such as adding training programs or expanding recruitment will not be sufficient to make real progress. The personnel situation is an adaptive challenge.²⁸ As described by management and leadership scholars such as Ron Heifetz and Donald Laurie, adaptive challenges are problems that lack readily apparent technical solutions. They require new strategies that depend on changing behavior, giving up old ways and obtaining the buy in and ownership of individuals across the system.²⁹

It is an issue that transcends any one organization or sector. It fits the paradigm John Kania and Mark Kramer described as “collective impact” to address complex, deeply-rooted problems and large-scale systemic change efforts such as revitalization of poor urban neighborhoods or urban education.³⁰ The personnel challenge requires long-term, collaborative action, built around a shared vision, by a broad coalition of institutions and actors.



The personnel crisis needs to be understood as a shared responsibility of CEO's and governing boards. Enlightened, responsible CEO's will embrace the challenges. However, governing boards, which possess legal responsibility, must take an ownership stake as well. They will need to adopt new policies, provide financial resources, collaborate with other organizations and clearly define human resource management expectations for their CEO's holding them accountable for performance.³¹

Short-Term Strategies

Responding to the adaptive challenge and building collective action initiative are long-term processes. They will take time to define, mobilize and yield results. However, executive transitions are ongoing and many are imminent. These must be treated as a priority. Several strategies can be pursued independently or together.

1. Delay transitions for top echelon CEO's. Due to the economy and emotional factors, some may desire to continue. However, there are several potential adverse implications:
 - Financial costs will rise. These are generally highly compensated people. Retention incentives will likely be additive, and delay the savings an organization may realize through transition.
 - Retention may delay needed organizational changes (e.g. leadership style, adoption of technology, fundraising strategy). This can discourage younger volunteers, frustrate the career aspirations of middle managers and alienate millennial generation employees.
 - Increasing reliance on long-standing (perhaps iconic) leaders may further tip the lay-professional power equation.
2. Recruit aggressively from the existing pool of Jewish organizational talent. Although limited, there are people who are ready to lead. Some may require coaxing to leave comfortable positions or incentives to overcome mobility barriers. There should be openness to crossing organizational settings.



3. Two strategies with similar implications are a) recruit successful leaders / managers from non-Jewish settings and b) recruit baby boomers seeking an “encore career.” The number of transitions and limited pipeline mean that, for the foreseeable future, organizations will hire people with minimal Jewish training and experience, either by design or necessity. Research from large corporations suggests that differences in overall success rates between internal and external candidates are not great; but that external candidates tend to do better when organizations are in crisis and internal candidates succeed more when the company is strong.³² External individuals will need to adjust to the Jewish professional’s public lifestyle and the impact of lay-professional relations. Lacking an existing supportive professional network, these individuals will require careful on-boarding, executive coaching and supplementary training to manage the transition. They may struggle for legitimacy in the eyes of colleagues, employees and the community at large. Some believe such individuals should be required to begin in a sub-executive role and / or obtain education and credentialing before being employed as CEOs.

This discussion raises interesting questions regarding a) how organizations broach the sensitive issue of succession with older CEO’s³³ and b) what roles retirees can play in their own organizations or others. Those with humility and openness to change can be an enormous resource for ongoing teaching, consulting, mentoring, and coaching. Defining post-retirement options may ease the ability to talk about transition.

Recommendations and Best Practices for Professional Human Resources Management

The interviews and literature suggested numerous strategies to address the personnel needs of the North American Jewish community. These are distilled into two major policy recommendations and a summary of best practices to be implemented.



1. Design and launch an appropriately resourced, national, long-term, collaborative, initiative to adopt best-practices in human resource recruitment, professional development and retention, as well as designing organizational culture, policies and practices that support professional excellence. The initiative will conceptualize the Jewish organizational network as a national system with shared and inter-dependent personnel needs. The initiative must incorporate and build on a campaign of advocacy and education of lay leaders, donors and senior managers as to the nature of the challenge and the need to address it. Using Collective Impact principles, the initiative will engage and define a shared vision and common agenda for local, national and international Jewish organizations, institutions of higher education, foundations, professional associations, for-profit search firms and others. It will promote mutually reinforcing activities and identify where new programs and possibly new organizations are needed.³⁴ It will define shared measures of success and engage in ongoing communication. Critical to success will be the establishment of a neutral “backbone organization” which plays an ongoing role as catalyst and coordinator.³⁵

Collective impact strategies require adjustments to normal modes of organizational independence and governance. In such inter-organizational alliances, individual organizations may deliver specific services or programs, but “service delivery is designed, organized, resourced, and coordinated” (i.e. governed) by the network of relationships among organizational leaders involved in the collaborative.³⁶

2. Create a multi-modal, North American center for executive development. The Center would develop educational curricula and strategies for training and inspiring newly hired CEO’s (e.g. the Harvard Graduate School of Education, one week seminar for new University Presidents), high potential mid-career individuals; and high potential individuals seeking to enter the field. It would also provide systemic leadership on the issues of executive development, succession planning, transition, executive coaching and continued professional development. If positioned to support the entire Jewish organizational network, it could assume



the backbone role described above. Larry Moses' thought piece for the Jim Joseph Foundation offers an intriguing set of goals and considerations for further exploration.³⁷

Ideally, by the time one becomes the CEO of a major Jewish organization, s/he will have developed a coherent vision for the Jewish future, the critical leadership, management and fundraising skills, detailed knowledge of the chosen field of service, broad knowledge of the Jewish world and a robust network of relationships. These assets equip the CEO not only to lead a particular organization; but to play an instrumental role in the global Jewish agenda. Corporations often achieve this by a planned program of assessment, training, job rotation, and growth producing assignments. Jewish professionals can't be managed like chess pieces. However similar job rotation, including experiences outside the Jewish community, could enhance a future CEO's value and improve collaboration and innovation. Professionals and lay leaders should value such layered experiences and work to remove barriers to achievement. The executive development center could provide unbiased career assessment, planning and counseling services to very high potential candidates that might incorporate aspects of corporate models.

The role of Israel

An Israel experience can inspire Jewish identity and engagement. If properly leveraged, it can be a launch pad to a professional career. An important recruitment strategy is to build exposure to professional and volunteer roles into all Israel experiences (as well as summer camp programs). In an exit survey of recent Israel MASA participants, 47% said they would like to work in a Jewish organization and another 40% said they would potentially consider it.³⁸ Professional visits, institutes and sabbaticals in Israel can serve as periodic motivational "booster shots." Beyond inspiration, it is important that high potential professionals spend extended and repeated time in Israel to develop a deeper understanding of contemporary society, acquire Hebrew language skills and relationships that can facilitate global dialogue,



collaboration and mutual support. An Israel experience of at least three months, and preferably a year, should be part of any long term professional development program.

Funding

It is evident, and reinforced by interviewees, that implementing the best practices described below, launching a center for executive development, a collective impact initiative and the creation of a backbone structure will require increases in funding. This will mean organizations devoting a greater portion of their operating budgets to these matters as well as seeking new funding. However, from a cost-benefit and leverage perspective, these investments should be seen as reasonable and essential, and not dismissed as overhead.³⁹

The role of Jewish foundations is critical. It should be a shared concern of each foundation, as they are dependent on the quality of grantees to fulfill their philanthropic visions and strategic priorities. They, no less than others, suffer from personnel weakness.

The foundations could incentivize a collective impact approach through a compatible funding model known as “high stakes donor collaboration.” The Bridgespan Group defines the following criteria, “*a shared multiyear vision around which donors pool talent, resources, and decision making.*”⁴⁰ Subsuming individual decision making to a funding collaborative as well as governance to a larger organizational collective is rare and difficult; but offers enormous potential and may be the essential factor in moving the initiative forward.

Best practices in Human Resource Management

- Within any organization, a well developed, comprehensive human resource function needs to address the following: careful design of organizational structure and job descriptions; continuous scouting, identification, cultivation and recruitment of high potential employees; skills in screening, interviewing and hiring; proper on-boarding, orientation, training, supervision and performance management; employee retention and career development



strategies, competitive compensation and personnel policies; supportive work culture and environment including reasonable expectations, team building and productive lay-professional relations. Such practices will improve the reputation and attraction of Jewish professional careers.

- In the Jewish community, emphasis is usually placed on recruitment, especially of beginning workers. However, effective retention strategies, embedded in a comprehensive HR program, are equally critical to sustain a high quality work force, leverage investments and reduce turnover costs.
- Proactive emergency and ongoing succession and transition planning. Special care is needed in cases of long tenure, charismatic or iconic, CEO's. Potential successors may worry that even when organizations desire change, the sense of loss and inevitable comparisons will make it difficult to succeed. As one potential CEO candidate noted, 'it might be better to be the second successor.' Succession planning and executive searches should include substantial representation from younger leaders a) to provide input into critical strategic questions and b) assess candidates' capacity to relate.
- Many, if not most, Jewish professionals did not plan for careers in Jewish organizational life. For some, an interesting job turned into a career. Individuals were often encouraged to consider a position by a friend, mentor, or chance acquaintance. These individuals were literally 'tapped on the shoulder' and encouraged to think about Jewish organizational work. All professional and volunteer leaders can play a similar role. As part of a broad initiative, special attention should be given to continually scouting for potential candidates, especially from the Jewish innovation sector.
- Many organizations actively or inadvertently discourage employees from exploring new opportunities. Rather than risk good people leaving the field, the community needs to develop ways to encourage retention and career development within the field, if not in a particular organization.⁴¹
- Special efforts are needed to encourage and support the advancement of women. Attention must be paid to flexible work schedules, maternity leave, work-life balance and providing on-ramps for women returning after child-rearing.



- Organizational culture must change to destigmatize and set positive expectations for remedial or ongoing training for CEO's. New CEO's should automatically be provided an executive coach and peer mentor. Annual performance reviews should define areas for growth and further training⁴²
- Professional associations, recognition activities, mentoring, collegial support, and proactive marketing can enhance the image and status of the profession.⁴³
- Boards of Directors must set expectations, actively monitor performance and hold management accountable for effective human resource management.⁴⁴

Volunteer & Informal Jewish Leadership

Although most of the burden for the Jewish future will fall on professionals; the role of volunteers, prominent individuals in government, entertainment, media, academia and others will be central to shaping the future and continued thriving of the Jewish people. In a decentralized, individualized and global Jewish world, inspiration, thought leadership and the impetus for change may come from anywhere. One needs only reflect on the establishment of Birthright Israel, Sara Silverman's "The Great Schlep," Steven Spielberg's role in Holocaust education or Thomas Friedman's influence on Jewish public opinion, to recognize that the efforts and impact of mainstream Jewish organizations are balanced by forces outside their control. We are fully dependent on the continued willingness of the wealthiest Jews to support Jewish causes. Prominent Jews in popular culture will shape and reinforce attitudes and behavior. Israeli leaders will influence how young Jews connect to the Jewish people.

Volunteer leadership

A shift has occurred in the classic lay – professional relationship. Built on non-profit law and historical evolution; the classic paradigm (with the partial exception of the Rabbinate) was that 'the Board sets policy and the staff implements it.' To a large degree, CEOs and senior staff played a facilitative



role empowering the Board to lead and then taking responsibility for managing implementation and administrative. Numerous factors have caused a power shift in favor of the CEO, which is endorsed by most interviewees. The new ideal is a vision-driven, empowered leader, who not only manages effectively, but shapes direction, policy and strategy. Nonprofit management literature validates a new paradigm where the Board and staff develop policy together; the Board sets policy; the staff implements policy and the Board and staff evaluate policy together (Herman, 2010, p 157-161). However, whether or not boards actually assert leadership, they possess authority, legal and moral responsibility for organizational success and sustainability. Successful non-profit leadership entails creative power sharing between the Board and CEO; a dynamic fraught with complexity and danger.

There are great risks if the Board lacks the capacity or will to play its mandated role. Agency failure may ensue. The Board's role in giving and fundraising is critical to organizational success. And as discussed earlier, it should assume a measure of ownership for assuring effective human resources practices.

Regarding volunteer leadership, there are several well recognized, troubling trends:

- Inadequate numbers of high quality (knowledgeable, skilled and financially capable) volunteer leaders.
- Limited and declining proportion of Jewish wealth and volunteer activism directed to Jewish causes.
- Difficulty attracting and retaining next generation volunteer leaders.



Overall, the extent and depth of volunteer orientation, training and development is very weak and problematic. Many volunteers resist training and professionals are hesitant to point out weakness.⁴⁵ Most effort is focused on 'young leadership' prospects. Efforts should be expanded to recruit, train and develop volunteer leaders.

However, the most impactful long-term strategy may actually be developing a professional leadership corps and CEOs who value and empower volunteer governance and are capable of inspiring and engaging high capacity volunteer leaders. This can launch a reinforcing, virtuous cycle of improvement, where better volunteers recruit better CEO's and so on. Today, CEO's are expected to be the true chief development officers. That role should transcend fundraising and include the development of high quality volunteers. CEO's must apply the same cultivation skills and efforts to identify, engage, empower and place individuals of vision, intelligence, knowledge, and diverse skills, in top governance positions. Organizational culture must change to value these qualities as much as financial ability.

Informal leadership

The subject of informal leadership appears to receive little focused consideration regarding its extent, trends and strategies to strengthen it. It is important on at least two levels:

- The impact that informal leaders may play on the internal thinking, direction, policy, strategy, operation and culture of the Jewish community and its organizations.
- As 'soft power assets,' able to influence external public opinion, government policy and action on critical issues of Jewish concern such as the security of Israel. However, growing division and willingness to publicly criticize Israel means that these individuals often work in conflicting ways.



Informal leaders can be categorized at least five ways, though not mutually exclusive:

- Prominent, widely recognized Jews who are influential in their professional fields, possess a strong Jewish identity and willingness to lend their prestige and power to Jewish issues – either internally or externally. In particular, this includes Jews in politics, high government positions, journalism and academia. They are able to leverage their knowledge, relationships and credibility, especially around issues related to Israel and Jewish security, to shape opinion and attitudes inside and outside the Jewish community.
- Others, similar in prominence, who may have rich Jewish lives and may serve as sources of Jewish pride; but do not act formally in Jewish affairs. Some of these individuals like Jon Stewart, who command wide followings, may be seen as role models or serve as the voice of a segment of the Jewish population. In that manner they may shape or reinforce attitudes or patterns of behavior.
- Extremely wealthy individuals, who by virtue of their philanthropy or their multi-faceted business, social and civic involvements, can assert leadership and influence. In particular, these individuals use mega foundations to shape organizational policy and priorities.
- Israeli or other global political, business and cultural leaders, whose opinions or actions shape North American thinking and attitudes, or through government policy, impact Jewish life in North America.

Most interviewees believe that the Jewish community continues to produce substantial numbers of prominent and influential Jews and that it continues to have substantial soft power assets. Yet given geo-political challenges, more would be better. There is greater concern about the declining share of Jewish philanthropy directed to Jewish causes.



Yet, worthy of further examination is a provocative article by Ron Unz (2012) which suggests a decline in Jewish academic achievement. Unz speculates that this may ultimately limit the current disproportionate Jewish access to elite universities, which he claims produce the majority of U. S. influentials.

Activities to cultivate informal leadership and soft power assets exist, primarily within individual organizations. CLAL and national programs such as the Dorot Fellowships, and Wexner Fellows play a role. Programs like Birthright Excel, the Bronfman Fellowships and ROI are focused on younger innovators and potential influentials. However, there is a sense that there is more opportunity and that devising strategies to identify, develop and engage rising Jewish influentials would be valuable. As an example, “She Should Run” is a U. S. Organization that works to identify and encourage promising women to seek public office. Another model is the Ruderman Fellows program, which brings Israeli Knesset members to the United States. As a caveat, collaborative efforts will be challenged by the diversity of opinions and will need to build a tolerant, inclusive attitude.

Policy Recommendation

Convene a national United States consultation involving leadership of the Jewish public affairs world on the topic of “Expanding Jewish Soft Power Resources.” Ideally, leaders of the major national public affairs organizations, the Republican Jewish Coalition, Jewish Democratic Council, and the largest local community relations agencies would convene under the sponsorship of a neutral umbrella to explore strategies and opportunities to deepen the number, activism and impact of highly visible and influential Jews in government, public service, politics, media, academia and the arts.



Such a consultation would need to be strictly non-partisan and encompass diverse perspectives. Careful attention and preparation is required to identify the most effective convener(s) and create an environment where promising ideas can move forward.

Outlook

We have been conditioned to view leadership as embodied by the image of the heroic, visionary, charismatic individual, capable of igniting the masses and bringing about dramatic change.⁴⁶

However, the challenges we currently face, though substantial and urgent, lack the clarity, acuity and drama of crises that typically give rise to heroic leaders. In truth, we pray that the need does not arise. And, the North American Jewish community is voluntary and resists centralized authority and uniformity. Moreover, changing cultural norms as well as evidence from leadership and management literature points to the need today for more empowering, collaborative leaders and processes where leadership is distributed and change emerges from a shared vision for the future.

In that context, we will require an army of professional, volunteer and informal leaders, who possess a deep understanding of the current context, and the passion, will and skill to take on the task of sustaining a thriving Jewish people.

Sadly today, we are inadequate to that challenge and a broad, sustained and urgent focus on leadership is required.



¹ The common practice of conflating leadership with an individual, often of the heroic, powerful, visionary type; obscures the reality that anyone can perform leadership behaviors that shape vision, inspire action or bring about outcomes.

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³¹ Austin & Salkowitz, Edell 2012.

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³⁴ For example, Mitam, (<http://www.mitam-hr.org/>) a new Israeli non-profit, formed to recruit non-profit staff and support human resource management. Likewise, shared services organizations (for example <http://www.missioncenter13c.com/>) have formed in the United States to support a range of non-profits needs including human resource management.

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⁴⁴ Tierney, Edell, 2012.

⁴⁵ Austin & Salkowitz, p 19-21.

⁴⁶ In the very critical venue of global political leadership, Yehezkel Dror has called for what he terms "The New Ruler." Many of the qualifications align with, though transcend, the ideal profile contained herein and are instructive. Dror, Yehezkel (2008). *The New Ruler. Background Policy Documents for Facing Tomorrow*. Jerusalem: The Jewish People Policy Planning Institute, p 133-155.