"MAKING" JEWISH LEADERS

STEVEN HUBERMAN, Ph.D.

Executive Director for Community Services, Jewish Federation Council of Greater Los Angeles

... the human diversity among the leaders of Jewish organizations is tied together with the thread of altruism. While they may differ in personality, style and physical appearance, the central unifying characteristic of the Jewish leaders is perhaps best summed up by the rabbinic dictum, "Great is learning if it leads to practice."

"These are hard times in which a genius would wish to live. Great necessities call forth great leaders."
Abigail Adams' 1790 letter to Thomas Jefferson

History vibrates with the names of great leaders. David Ben Gurion, Winston Churchill, Mahatma Gandhi built their nations. Tom Watson, Edwin Land, Alfred Sloan built great organizations. This essay is built on the premise that successful Jewish organizations require such visionaries.

What is essential for the future of Jewish organizations is transformative leadership. This study explores how to cultivate such vibrant Jewish leaders—those who will inspire and propel people into action and who will be agents of change. Walt Disney summed up his self-concept this way—"If you can dream it, you can do it." This results-obsession has driven all great leaders. This is a useful ideal for the Jewish community.

In order to plan for its future, the **Jewish Federation Council of Greater Los** Angeles conducted, under the direction of the author, a "Key Leadership Survey." Seven hundred and seven Federation and agency board members responded. The 71% mail response rate (typical returns are about 40%) reflects the importance of this issue. This paper will analyze leadership demographics, motivation, training, and planning options. The trends which emerge from this Los Angeles study may be applicable to other metropolitan Jewish communities in North America.2 Similar studies will need to be undertaken elsewhere. Our findings are of significance since Los Angeles is the second largest Jewish community in the United States.

WHO LEADS JEWISH FEDERATIONS AND AGENCIES?

The average Jewish leader in our study is male, age 53, married, finished graduate school, and works full-time (Table 1).

Leadership comes from every age category. The small number of leaders under the age of 35 is life-cycle related. Persons in that age bracket are settling into a

I express my appreciation to Wayne Feinstein for his analysis of the preliminary draft of this study.

R & E Research Associates corordinated the data collection and computerized analysis for this study.

^{1.} Effective leaders are best understood as orchestra conductors. They are vision-oriented, create new ideas, policies, and methods. They have a clear focus and an agenda. In their seminal work, Professors Warren Bennis and Burt Nanus of the University of Southern California also observe that such persons are problem finders, reliable, persistent, and courageously patient. They provide their organization with a clear sense of future purpose and direction. Leaders—The Strategies for Taking Charge. New York: Harper and Row, 1985.

^{2.} Eve Fielder and Rosina Becerra of UCLA assisted in survey design, data reduction, and table construction. Marilyn Friedman and Deborah Messenger aided in the conceptualization; Marum Rieger was the editorial assistant. This paper defines a "Jewish leader" as a board member of the Federation or constituent agency. Also included were members of the Campaign Cabinet and Women's Conference. In all, 20 boards were surveyed. Persons who held more than one position were included only once.

Sex Age		Age	Marital Statu		tus Highest Level of Edi		ication	
Male 64 35 at		35 and under	10	10 Married		High School Graduate or Les		
Female	36	36-45	22	Divorced	5	Bachelors Degree	3	
		46-55	25	Separated	2.	Masters Degree	2.	
		ς6-6ς	23	Widowed	4	MD/JD/PhD	30	
		66-75	15	Never Married	3	Other		
		Over 75	5					
	_	Mean Age = 53 Ye	ars					
		Occupation				Employment Status		
Manage	ment/	Administrator/Executi	ve 18		Employ	yed Full-Time	60	
Lawyer	Attori	ney	15		Employ	yed Part-Time	11	
Banking/Stocks/Investments		ks/Investments	11		Unemployed and Looking for Work		*	
Teacher	r/Profe	essor/Educator	7		Retired	1	13	
Homen	naker		6		Part- or	r Full-Time Volunteer	15	
Physicia	ın/Sur	geon/Medical	6					
Contrac	tor/Re	eal Estate Developer	5					
CPA/A	ccount	ant/Bookkeeper	5					
Own Bu	usiness		5					
Rabbi			1					
Other (Sales/	Artists/Clerical/Etc.)	14					
Don't K	(now/	Not Applicable	7					

^{*}Indicates less than 1%

career and family and have minimal discretionary time. Jewish organizations engage in "affirmative action" to increase the number of women in top leadership. Today, large numbers of women work outside the home and consequently have less time available for volunteer activity. In time, women in business and professions will come to volunteer as much as their male counterparts.

Jewish board members are drawn primarily from senior corporate management, law, and finance. Only 13% are retired and 15% are full- or part-time volunteers. They are exceptionally committed. Over 50% have served with an agency over seven years and their service extends to seven or more hours per month. The majority intend to give more years of volunteer service to the organization. Relatively few (5%) plan to drop out en-

tirely from the organization (Table 2).

A maxim in Jewish life is "the more, the more." The more you are involved in

A maxim in Jewish life is "the more, the more." The more you are involved in one aspect of Jewish life, the more likely you will be involved in other aspects. Thus, 59% of our leaders serve on four or more boards.

Fundraising, planning and allocating are all essential components of the communal enterprise. Ideally, leadership should be involved in all these spheres. Unfortunately, the reality differs from the ideal in Los Angeles County. Fundraising and spending are in large measure bifurcated. This division may be unique to Los Angeles and underscores the difficulty of the change process. Table 3 shows that 40% of our leaders do not work for the campaign. On the average, board members

Table 2
SERVICE CHARACTERISTICS OF IEWISH LEADERS (IN PERCENTAGES)

Years Volunteered with Organization	Hours per Month Volunteered		Service on Board/Committees	
I-3 2.4	None	6	I	- 8
4-6 25	1-3	2.1	2-3	33
7-9 12	4-6	23	4 or more	69
IO-I2 II	7-9	Ю		
13-15 7	10-12	15		
16 + 21	13-15	6		
	16 +	15		

Variable Number of Hours

Median = 5 Hours per Month

Type of Involvement Interested in	Future Plan with Organization		
Remaining in Present Organization/Department	61	Stay Only a Few More Years	7
Pursuing Other Opportunities in Other Organizations	18	Make a Multi-year Commitment	48
Combination of the above	16	Don't Know How Long Will Stay	45
Dropping out altogether	5		

spend only one to three hours per month in this activity. However, most (64%) are willing to do more in campaign education, telephone and person-to-person solicitation. It will therefore require concerted effort to impress all board members not only with the overarching importance of campaign but with the acute need for their training and participation in campaign activity.

WHAT MOTIVATES THEM?

"Keep the dream alive!" That is the essence of an organization's vitality. To do it requires a steady stream of competent and enthusiastic leaders. Table 4 confirms

the need for organizations to be proactive—to seek out capable leaders and stimulate their interest in the organization. One-to-one outreach is the key. Most leaders (60%) said the organization contacted them to invite their involvement; it was not they who initiated the contact. Over 50% of the contactors were friends or associates already in the organization.

The result of Jewish communal participation has been overwhelmingly personal fulfillment—95% of our respondents say they have enjoyed the experience; 76% say they feel they have made an impact on the organization; and 76% say their participation has strengthened their Jewish identity.

Table 3
PARTICIPATION IN THE UNITED JEWISH FUND (UJF) CAMPAIGN (IN PERCENTAGES)

Hours/Months Worked for UJF		Willingness to Do More Work for UJF		Activity Interested in for UJF	
None	40	Yes	2.4	Education and Training	31
1-3	26	No	36	Telephone Gift Solicitation	24
4-6	13	Maybe	40	Person-to-Person Gift Solicitation	20
4–6	4			New Gift Recruitment	14
10-12	5			Other	11
13-15	2				
16 +	5				
Varies	5				

Table 4 SOURCE AND EVALUATION OF INVOLVEMENT (IN PERCENTAGES)

Who Influenced the Decision to Voluntee	r	Initiator of First Contact with Organization		Rating of Personal Experience in Organization		
No One	29	Respondent Made First Contact	40	Very Rewarding	51	
Someone in Organization	28	Organization Contacted Respondent	60	Moderately Rewarding	28	
Friend	23			Somewhat Rewarding	18	
Someone in Family	9			Not at All Rewarding	18	
Multiple People Influenced	4					
Business Associate	4					
Rabbi	3					

Impact comes with perseverance. Those who have been involved in the organization for many years say they feel they do make a difference. After a long tenure they see and understand the large communal picture and how they fit in. They have now acquired enough experience to understand what it takes to be effective -"Keep your eye upon the doughnut, not upon the hole." They are now able to be more circumspect in selecting their areas of service where their abilities can effect the greatest good. Relative newcomers, on the other hand, defined as having less than three years of board tenure, tend to get frustrated. They are not yet enjoying gratification from effective leadership and require special nurturance as they move through the process of leadership development. In contrast, those who have been involved for seven or more years feel they are now making a difference.

Rated as the most rewarding activities are specific committee and program planning functions and commitment to constituencies. For example, Jewish Big Brothers and Hillel board members are highly motivated to help the young. Many say their agency service is a way to repay the community for one's own personal success. When results are tangible, leaders express satisfaction.

The uniquely Jewish dimension of the work constantly surfaces in our study. The biblical notion that it is not good to be alone undergirds much of Jewish thought. Life is with People, the classic sociological

text, puts it another way. Jews are best able to do good deeds in organized frameworks. It cannot be done on one's own. The initial and sustaining reasons for involvement are altruistic: 65% see the organization as a means to fulfilling their aspiration for Jewish community involvement; 57% have become involved because they have the desire to help others (Table 5); few (3%) have become involved because of dissatisfaction with non-Jewish organizations. When asked what motivates them to continue in Federation or the agency, leaders replied:

A sense of responsibility toward my fellow Jews. I was taught to help others and to give back.

I see the Federation as an historical continuity of 'Kehila,' as the instrument of strengthening and identifying with the spectrum of needs and problems in Jewish life.

To be a part of the Jewish community. To assist and contribute and further Judaism for future generations.

For others, involvement is the family thing to do. It provides a strong link in the generational chain. We were told:

Involvement in the organization has had a very positive effect on our entire family. We, our children, and now our grandchildren have been actively involved and have made lifelong friends. The organization has been our main area for our Jewish identification.

 ${\it Table~5} \\ {\it MOTIVATION~FOR~VOLUNTEER~LEADERSHIP~INVOLVEMENT~(IN~PERCENTAGES)} \\$

Primary Motivation for First Involvement in Organization		Reasons for Continued Involvement				
To Be Involved in the Jewish Community	65	Involved with/Help Jewish Community	37			
Desire to Help Others	57	Make Contribution	28			
Desire to Be a Decisionmaker	29	Committed to Organization Goals/Role	17			
To Get Involved in a Particular Program	26	Concern for Group/Focus/Issues (e.g., Youth, Aged, Etc.)	14			
Friends/Family Encouraged Me	22	For the Survival/Future/Tradition of Jewish LIfe	8			
"Step Up" in My Community Work	15	Enjoy the People/Contact	6			
To Be with Friends/Associates	11	To Use My Experience/Skills	4			
To Expand Business/Professional Opportunities	4	Jewish Identity	3			
Frustration with Community Volunteer Work	3	Relationship with Staff	2			
Other	17					

My mother was always active in the community. I have been as well. It gives me great pleasure to have brought my daughter in and for us to work together. I look forward to bringing my grandchildren.

My husband and I are both involved. Part of our sense of duty is for the future of our children.

When asked how their involvement could be enhanced, answers related to agency and interpersonal issues. Those who were involved with only one agency desired a greater understanding about other organizations in the community and the Federation in particular because the tendency is to become so involved with only one agency that the broader community picture is obscured. Among the other recommendations were:

- -Have smaller committees to facilitate getting the job done.
- Promote more internal and interorganizational communication and coordination.
- Increase the teamwork between lay and professional leadership.

Those agencies which receive the highest ratings are those that express an openness to new leaders. Strong, established leaders may guide the agencies, but newcomers are welcomed and encouraged

and cultivated. Leaders, senior and neophyte, are made to feel important to the agency and their input is sought with equal eagerness and receptivity.

WHO ARE THE EFFECTIVE JEWISH LEADERS?

What are the keys to leadership success? In a comprehensive Gallup Poll, America's foremost business leaders, scientists, artists, educators, and statesmen were probed about how they "made it." Americans' "best" desire to excel motivates their commitment to good work habits, to writing and speaking effectively, getting things done, exhibiting self-confidence, to being concerned about and motivating others, working long hours, reading extensively, and being enthusiastic lifelong learners. Jonas Salk, medical researcher, says, "Apart from being well trained and professionally competent in the field in which one works, is the need for keen curiosity about everything and anything related to it."3

^{3.} George and Alec Gallup. The Great American Success Story. Illinois: Dow Jones Irwin, 1986, p. 35. The median IQ of the nation's successful people is 140. Interestingly, the most cited rewards for high achievers are self-respect, recognition by peers, and contributions to society.

Table 7 LEADERSHIP INVOLVEMENT IN TRAINING AND EDUCATION PROGRAMS (IN PERCENTAGES)

Training Participation	Rating of Training Prog	gram	Perceived Needed Skills		
Yes, Participated in Program Offered by Federation	29	Very Adequate	35	More Knowledge about Issues Affecting the Jewish Community	35
Yes, Participated in Program Offered by Other Organization/Department	7	Moderately Adequate	35	How to Motivate Staff and Lay Leaders for Top Performance	34
No, Did Not Participate in Any Program	65	Somewhat Adequate	23	To Know More about Jewish Community Agencies Services and Programs	32
		Totally Inadequate	7	Long Range Planning	31
				Evaluating Program Results	30
				Budgeting and Financial Planning	28
				Communication and Negotiation Skills	2.4
				Fundraising	20
				Judaica	16
				None of the Above	15
				Other	4

High achievement persons in Jewish organizations presumably also embody those personality traits. I sought to find out what was unique about their ascendancy within the Federation system. Table 6 shows that our leaders regard the following attributes as most important commitment to the goals of the organization (79%), liking people and getting along with them (69%), and having a keen knowledge of the organization's principles and functions. They also say it is essential to be patient, tolerant and flexible. Willingness to raise funds was viewed as significantly important by less than a third of the leaders.4

A minority (29%) of our leaders have

participated in formal, systematic leadership programs offered by the Federation or its beneficiaries (Table 7). Only 34% of those who participated felt the training was adequate. They regard such programs as best at exposing persons to issues facing the community, but weakest in terms of actual skill development. Participants remarked.

Table 6 IMPORTANCE OF SELECTED ATTRIBUTES FOR BEING A LAY LEADER (IN PERCENTAGES)

Attributes	
Commitment to Goals of Organization	79
Liking People and Getting Along with Them	69
Knowledge of Issues and Programs in Organization	62
Patience and Tolerance	54
Flexibility	49
Knowledge of Jewish Community	36
Willing to Raise Funds	31
Knowledge of Jewish History and Traditions	10
Able to Be Major Financial Contributor	7
Other	5

^{4.} I am intrigued by the similarity between the profile of a successful lay leader and a successful Jewish communal professional. Research has verified that a successful social service professional must be committed to the field, like people and get along with them, subordinate personal for lay preferences, be flexible and patient, work hard, and be technically competent, see Brian O'Connell. Effective Leadership In Voluntary Organizations. Chicago: Association Press, 1976.

	Very Effective	Moderately Effective	Not Effective
Enabling Volunteers to "Move up the Ladder"	30	53	17
Recruiting Talented Individuals	28	62	11
Integrating Younger Leaders into Positions of Responsibility	26	54	20
Rewarding Volunteer Leaders	25	57	23
Keeping Volunteers Involved and Committed to Organization	25	58	17
Increasing Jewish Identity of Volunteer Leadership	20	57	23
Teaching Leadership Skills	8	49	42

Was excellent basic exposure—only did not have analytical and skill development.

Learned much about the organization of the community. It provided a basis for integrating. It's a good orientation to the Federation but it's not a leadership program.

Those board members with three years or less of tenure say they want more special training. They want ongoing education to learn more about issues having impact on the Jewish community. They also desire advanced management training—long-range strategic planning, program evaluation, financial planning and how to better motivate staff and lay leadership. Only 8% of the respondents (Table 8) regarded their agency as very effective in providing such continuing education.

When asked about how to improve the administration and function of the agency, suggestions included having more board member "sabbaticals" and transfers to expand leadership opportunities, holding inter-agency problem-solving forums, establishing total family involvement opportunities which include spouses and children. Younger lay leaders requested especially more personal role models, lay leader mentors who are successful in their professional and organizational lives and who will work with their younger counterparts. Twinning senior leaders with those

less experienced can provide positive reinforcement and encouragement to young, capable, enthusiastic leaders who seek to ascend the organizational ladder of service. Newer leaders need and want more skills and colleagues who can provide them with the guidance and inspiration they need for success.

Federation and its agencies are rated highest for enabling volunteers to "move up the ladder" and for recruiting talented individuals.

HOW CAN WE DO A BETTER JOB?

To enhance leadership development work, we should recall the "Roast Chicken" satire on how a Chinese village learned how to roast food. The villagers had never before cooked. A careless youngster caused a fire in a home with a chicken in it. When the villagers rummaged through the

^{5.} For an illuminating study on how people move up in an organization, refer to the research of Professor John Kotter, Chair of the Organizational Behavior and Human Resources Management Area at Harvard Business School. Power and Influence—Beyond Formal Authority. New York: Free Press, 1985. Kotter finds that those who move up the ladder develop a massive amount of relevant organizational information; develop scores of cooperative relationships; nurture their interpersonal skills; control significant resources; have a strong track record; and are constantly taking on more challenging responsibilities.

ruins of the house, they found a new delicacy, a roasted chicken. This led to a large number of house fires. The story's moral is, if you do not know how the chicken was roasted, you burn down a house each time you want to eat roast chicken. The "Roast Chicken" syndrome disables organizations that do not examine and try to understand themselves.6

With the goal in mind of continually striving to enhance the effectiveness of the organization, our leaders were asked how we can do a better job collectively. A recurring answer was: outreach to particular targets of people. This thrust has been underscored by William Kahn in a speech given at the Conference of Jewish Communal Service in 1985.

Outreach must be made a communal priority if we hope to affect a significant part of the more-than-half of the North American Jewish population unaffiliated with Jewish communal life. There are indications that some are unaffiliated because they are not familiar with Jewish communal life and don't know how to begin to connect.7

Our respondents say the groups that should be targeted especially are: persons under the age of 40; persons active in other lewish organizations; and lews who are leaders in general community organizations (Table 9).

How should this be done? Through one-to-one recruitment. Veteran leaders should reach out to friends and business associates and show them the opportunities for involvement and the benefits to be derived. Respondents recommended:

Table 9 TARGET GROUPS FOR RECRUITMENT INTO LEADERSHIP PARTICIPATION IN ORGANIZATION (IN PERCENTAGES)

Target Groups				
Persons under 40	67			
Jews Active in Other Jewish Organizations and Synagogues	63			
Jews Who Are Leaders in General Community Organizations	62			
Women	43			
Affluent Persons	42			
Political Figures	31			
Other	16			

Have Board members invite selected individuals to attend board meetings or have a planned event to introduce them to the organization, its goals and accomplishments No fundraising.

It should be the responsibility of all board members and lay leaders to recruit through one on one contact to keep the organization strong and viable Invitation from friends and social peers is the most effective way to recruit new blood.

Studies conducted by the Council of Iewish Federations have documented that the best fundraising Federations have the best community images. They are seen as prestigious places, and/or the central community address. Enhanced public relations are therefore essential to expand the leader base. Our leaders remarked:

People need to see more of what we accomplish and not just see us as a fundraising group. Educate them on our work and let them know we need leaderhsip and not just money.

Publicize efforts to address the needs and issues facing the community. We need to have leaders who can go out and do public relations with businesses, synagogues, secular groups, schools and professional associations.

^{6.} In this parable, I have modified Charles Lamb's classic 1822 essay. To improve organizational performance, we need to understand why things work. An approach to doing this is set forth in Rasabeth Moss Kanter. The Change Masters - Innovations for Productivity in the American Corporation. New York: Simon and Schuster, 1983.

^{7.} William Kahn, "Jewish Communal Service and the Professional Today and Tomorrow," Journal of Jewish Communal Service, Vol 62, No.2 (1985) p. 112.

The organization needs a prestigious or helping profile in the community at large. People need to associate the Federation with positive deeds, not fundraising. People want their membership to be seen as prestigious and meaningful by those outside the organization.

In addition to the importance of personalized leader recruitment and careful projection of the right community image, respondents made other concrete suggestions for attracting and retaining leadership:

- 1. Reduce the number of non-essential committees to make for greater efficiency. Have smaller work groups that are task-and outcome-oriented. Large board meetings, we were told, are low gratification events, being perceived as "no meat" meetings that are "boring, unproductive and appear to have no real purpose."
- 2. Promote more interorganizational communication and coordination. Provide leaders on agency and synagogue boards with the big community picture. Try to reduce tunnel vision which concentrates only on the particular agency which one serves.
- 3. Develop significant, high status projects with a beginning, middle, and end as an alternative to those not interested in sitting on boards. New and creative projects should be available for those who can donate only a limited amount of time over a limited period. A central skills bank for the overall system could provide the network for matching leaders and these projects.
- 4. At the entry point of service, each new agency leader should undergo an orientation to the issues facing the *total* Jewish community; the briefing would transcend a particular agency. At midpoints of service, more sabbaticals should be provided to mitigate volunteer burnout. Leaders should be rotated in assignments and even between boards to produce broad-based exposure to and knowledge of the community. This could involve both

internal Federation-agency leadership rotation and synagogue involvement. At exit points, vigorous followup should be conducted among leadership dropouts to ascertain why they departed.⁸

IN CONCLUSION

To summarize, Jewish leadership continues to be predominantly male, married, middle-aged, and from the socio-economic elite. At all levels this profile is opening up demographically. This reflects the democratization of the Jewish polity. More women, single, and younger persons from all occupations are being recruited. Our leaders are extremely committed, typically having been with their agency for over seven years and having served seven or more hours per month. Their commitments are manifold—most are involved in four or more boards.

Although campaigning for the United Jewish Fund might be considered a natural role for every board member, 40% do not participate in this activity. Most, however, are prepared to do more for the campaign. A structured customized framework is required to encourage and facilitate board members' campaign participation. Otherwise, the raisers and spenders of dollars may become bifurcated.

The leaders did not usually volunteer their services on their own; they were recruited by someone already in the organization. Almost all enjoy their participation; most feel they have made an impact on the agency. Most importantly, they feel their Jewishness has been fortified. All that takes patience and perseverance. A sense of gratification from playing their role seems to take seven or more years. Until that point, volunteer leaders are still exploring their skills, seeking their

^{8.} Although our study dealt with federation and agency leadership, I strongly believe federations have a responsibility to assist interested synagogues in leadership development and retention. The health of the federation and synagogue are indissolubly linked.

niche and learning the system. They are active out of a sense of altruism and Jewish purpose. It is often the family thing to do.

We found that the most successful leaders are totally committed to the organization, very knowledgeable, and interpersonally adept. Few have participated in systematic leadership development training. Younger leaders want more managerial skills, a better sense of the total Jewish community, and caring mentors.

The majority of respondents call for a more proactive and focused outreach effort, especially young professionals and those who are senior leaders in synagogues and in non-Jewish activities. Although broad based leadership development programs should be open to everyone, there is also the need for selective cultivation of future key leaders. It was suggested that one-on-one solicitation would be ideal. Our leaders maintain that such outreach will only be successful if the agency has an outstanding community image, an image that is backed up by its deeds.

Those surveyed called for changes in how Jewish community business is conducted. Among the ideas expressed are smaller work groups; greater interorganizational collaboration; high status projects for those who do not want to serve on committees or boards; system-wide orientations for all board members; and more iob diversification.

In conclusion, the human diversity among the leaders of Jewish organizations is tied together with the thread of altruism. While they may differ in personality, style and physical appearance, the central unifying characteristic of the Jewish leaders is perhaps best summed up by the rabbinic dictum, "Great is learning if it leads to practice."9 Their passion is to bring heaven to earth, to perfect the world. Jewish leaders act on Theodor Herzl's view that "we are a people, one people, Am Echad." It is this ahavat Yisrael, love of the Jewish people, that is the most Jewish of Jewish virtues.

^{9.} To gain insight into Judaic perspectives on leadership, see David Hartman A Living Covenant the Innovative Spirit in Traditional Judaism. New York: Free Press, 1985. (Quotation is on page 70.) Amnon Rubinstein. The Zionist Dream Revisited-From Herzl to Gush Envnim and Back. New York: Schocken Books, 1984. (Herzl is quoted on p. 10.) Haskel Lookstein, Were We Our Brothers' Keepers? The Public Response of American Jews to the Holocaust 1938-44. New York: Hartmore House, 1985.