

Dov update to the Board Dec 2015

Dear Board members,

Last week I had my “New CEO ‘360’ Check-in.” Nearly every new CEO in our Jewish Federation system undergoes this 360.

If you’ve never heard of the term before, let me explain. A 360 is a feedback review of progress, challenges and opportunities. (The term ‘360’ is because you’re reviewed from all directions). Our colleagues at JFNA (the Jewish Federations of North America) came in for several days and interviewed dozens of our donors, Board members, community leaders, Agency heads, committee chairs, professionals, and others. They basically asked two questions: what is Dov doing effectively, and what could Dov be doing more effectively? Everything was anonymous, and if more than a couple of respondents offered similar viewpoints, the comments were reported back to me.

I’m deeply grateful to all those who participated in the review. Like most professionals working in Jewish communal service, I’ve had regular annual reviews. I’m also proud that our Federation implemented a deeper and more thorough annual review process for all our professionals this last year. These reviews are important, because they help us get better, and serve our community more effectively.

It’s going to take a while to process some of the feedback I received. Some of the comments, taken together, were contradictory – which isn’t surprising in a community federation as diverse and thoughtful as ours. It’s also more helpful than you might think. For example, I received some comments along the lines of “Dov is spending too much time in the office and not enough time with our donors and Board members.” But I also received feedback that “Dov is spending too much time out of the office and not enough time with our professionals.” Oh, and for good measure, that “Dov isn’t spending enough time with our agencies/our rabbis/our synagogues/our regions.”

Everything in our community is a trade-off. Sometimes the trade-offs are easier to understand. Frequently they're not. The message I've been hearing this past year is that you need me to show up to many events and meetings (and sometimes I've been surprised to encounter real anger and unhappiness if I don't show up at certain events), but we're a huge community with many events and commitments. This last Sunday, for example, I was 'expected' to be at three simultaneous events! We're also a big enough Federation to be represented by more than just the CEO and the President. The issue, perhaps, is how we communicate expectations that the CEO (and the President) can't be at everything. We'll never strike the right balance to please everyone, but it's good to see that people are noticing. And we'll keep striving for more clarity.

On a personal level, I'd like to spend more time out in the community, meeting our leadership and donors, helping our fundraising, and boosting our profile. I was glad to see this reflected in the feedback I received, too. I know that you'll understand that I need to do this while – at the same time – continuing to support and direct our professional team in the best way possible.

I also received some useful feedback on social media. We've done a lot in this field in the past year. I've boosted my own Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and Blog/web presence significantly, and there's more I want to do. I'm deeply grateful to our Marketing Chair, Pam Brewster, and our Interim Chief Marketing Officer, Melanie Gorelick, who have done some terrific work on Federation's media and social media platforms these past few months. The feedback that I received was overwhelmingly positive on our work in this area. On a personal level, I'm planning to reduce the personal highlight in my own social media profile, and encourage us to find more avenues to highlight our donors, leaders and professionals. Not that I won't continue tweeting, blogging and posting on a frequent basis, mind you – I'm just going to be encouraging everyone else (including you, if you love what our Federation and community represent, and you're reading this memo) to do more.

I was grateful to see receive positive feedback on the many parlor meetings and outreach events that I've spoken at this last year. I don't want to stop doing them – but there was a valuable suggestion in the feedback I received and I think it's worth noting. It can't just be the "Dov show." There's so much talent, passion and energy in our Federation, and we have to find ways to highlight that

spirit. In the months ahead we're going to launch a major program called "Small Parlor Meetings." (We don't have a good name for this venture yet – first person to come up with a good name may get a reward!). Under the direction of my colleagues Julie Rosenberg and Amy Biloon, we're going to launch a significant outreach push to have more small-scale hosted events and parlor meetings, to update the community on Federation programs and values. We're training a small group of professionals to begin the first round, to see what's feasible and what's worthwhile. We'd love to have parlor meetings and briefings in private homes, on a frequent and regular basis. Please consider hosting (and speaking).

This is all part of an encouraging tension that I saw in my evaluation (and in what Federation does) between "we should do more fundraising" and "we should do more outreach." We're now approaching a new horizon, in which both those areas are getting stronger and more vibrant. You'll see even more energy in those two areas in the months ahead, as we increase the frequency and impact of events and meetings.

It's been a year of change for our Federation. This past year we've seen smooth and successful transitions into a new Global Connections process, the beginnings of a new Allocations and Strategic Prioritization process, new Campaign efforts, a new Outreach and Engagement Division, a new Leadership Pipeline program and a new Synagogue Liaison program, and more. Many of the programs and platforms for these initiatives are up and running. We're setting up a Security Committee to look at ways to enhance the safety and security of the community, and we're completely revamping our social media outreach. We're also trying to create a new understanding of Jewish communal professionalism in the community: better conditions for our professionals, more understanding of their needs. And there's more for us to do.

All of which is why a 360, a complete check-in, was so helpful.

In gematria, the system of codes that assign numerical value to Hebrew letters, . Normally we'd translate this from Modern Hebrew to be 'waiter.' But it actually has a more appropriate meaning for this discussion. In Daniel 1:11 the *meltzar* is the chief steward. He serves. He guards. He helps direct those serving others.

I'm mindful every day of the obligations of this stewardship, and its responsibilities.

I'm deeply grateful to you, our Board leaders, for entrusting me with this sacred stewardship. And I'm grateful for all those in our community who participated in the 360.

I'm thankful for my colleagues from JFNA, who took several days to come in for the interviews. And I'm deeply grateful to Leslie, our President, and Gary Aidekman, Chair of the CEO Search Committee. Both Leslie and Gary continue to inspire with their service and leadership.

I hope we can continue, all of us, to serve and lead.

Warmly,

Dov