

Rabbi goes back to school – business school

BY PATRICIA CORRIGAN, SPECIAL TO THE JEWISH LIGHT

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There's no business like shul business – so says [Rabbi Carnie Shalom Rose](#), Senior Rabbi at Congregation B'nai Amooona in Creve Coeur. Rose does not go so far as to sing the line, but he does express it with great gusto, a tribute to his enthusiasm for a recent experience in continuing education.

Along with Michael Samis, executive director at B'nai [Amooona](#), Rose attended a week-long program at the Kellogg Management Education for Jewish Leaders at Northwestern University's Kellogg School of Management in Evanston, Ill.

Some 67 rabbis, synagogue executive directors and other Jewish leaders from 17 states, Canada, and the United Kingdom took part in the program, held Nov. 29 through Dec. 3.

Participants from the Reform, Conservative, Reconstructionist and Orthodox movements attended.

Rose took time recently to talk about the experience.

How did you come to take part in the program?

Dinah Jacobs, founder and academic director of the program, invited us. A synagogue is a unique entity, and managing it requires a lot of nuance and finesse. You need skills that don't always come together in the for-profit world or the not-for-profit world.

Were these skills the focus of the week-long program?

Yes. The program presented a synthesis of the business skills that make a synagogue function effectively and efficiently. Most rabbis don't get this kind of training in seminary, where the focus is on theology and pastoral preparation. It was inspiring to go hone business skills.

Classes were offered in mission and metrics, fund raising, governance, marketing, financial management, conflict resolution and negotiation skills and crisis management. What class particularly impressed you?

One of the most powerful classes was on values-based or mission-based leadership, which should be a top priority. I had some significant training in the not-for-profit world along with rabbinical school, and this class reminded me that I was not crazy, that many principles I had studied and understood and have tried to bring to congregational life were best practices. That was empowering.

What changes will you make as a result of taking part in the program?

I've come back to lead with an added sense of informed confidence. At B'nai [Amooona](#), we were already in the midst of developing a significant strategic plan that we will unveil in the spring, but this program gave both of us new ideas on public relations, marketing and social networking.

Anything more?

We will refocus on the notion of serving the membership and also on reaching out beyond the pew. At the synagogue, we tend to think a lot about who is sitting in the pew, yet there are a lot who are not. We might begin to find ways to draw them in through mission-based leadership.

How so?

I believe that people are hungry for meaning and consequence. That is often implied, and it is understood by people in the know, but we don't share that readily or loudly or creatively or strategically enough. What we learned in Evanston will help us move forward in several ways.

Can you be more specific?

Taking part in the program reminded us about development and how to be successful at it. We will have a different donor base with the next generation, and we need a different approach.

How would you describe the general mood of the group?

I was inspired by the creativity, the dedication and the commitment of my colleagues in these hard times. There was not a lot of "woe is me." Of course, as the economy gets worse, the synagogue gets busier, as people come to pray for change. But they also come for comfort, for community, for networking. They come to help one another.

How did the participants help one another?

We were able to support one another as we shared best practices and successes. Sometimes, we think we are an island unto ourselves. That is simply not the case. In Evanston, I was reminded that the synagogue remains the touchstone of a successful Jewish community. This is how we go forward.