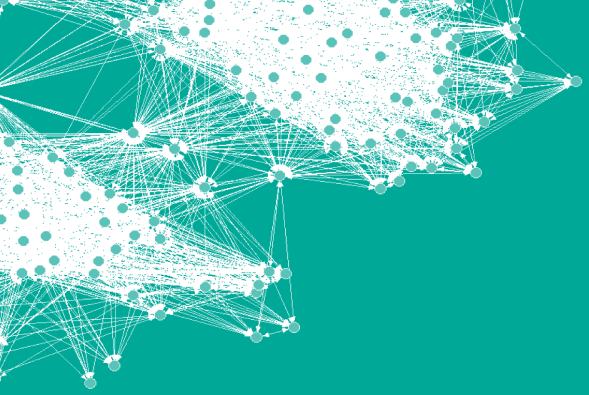
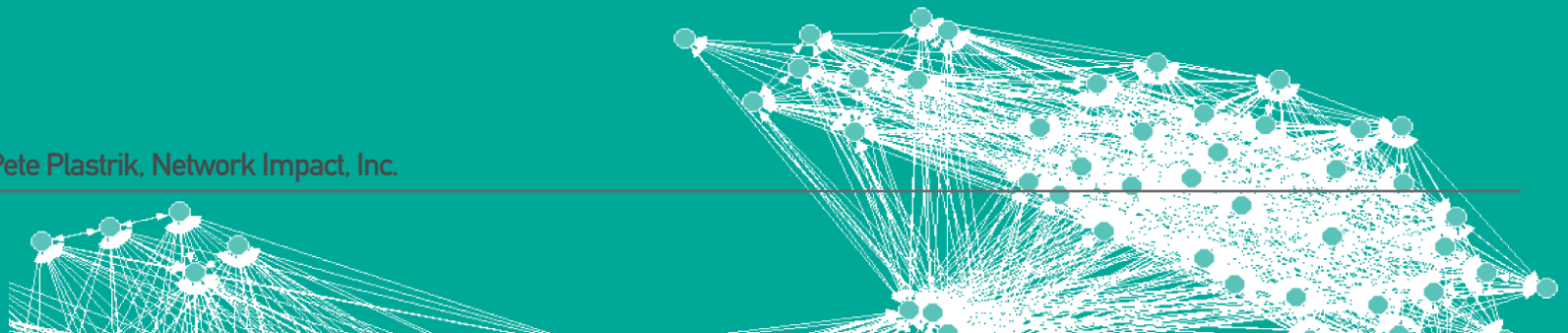


REBOOT

JIM JOSEPH FOUNDATION
Shimon ben Joseph

Network Evaluation Summary Report 2012

Madeleine Taylor and Pete Plastrik, Network Impact, Inc.

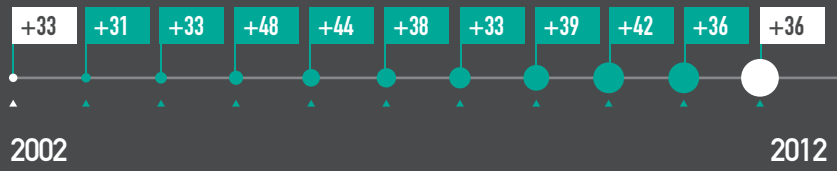


Reboot is

INTRODUCTION

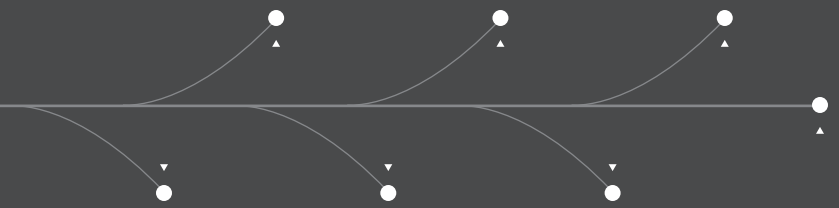
a growing network of young cultural creatives and opinion leaders working to "reboot" Jewish culture, rituals, and traditions and make them vital and resonant for young adults, the Jewish community, and the larger society. These cultural creatives have influence beyond themselves in wider social and professional networks.

Every year since 2002, Reboot has invited 30–35 new members to its annual 3-day open space Summit to exchange personal experiences and ideas about Jewish identity.



Open Space Technology (OST) is an approach for hosting meetings and conferences, focused on an important purpose or task. The format is distinctive for its initial lack of an agenda, which sets the stage for participants to create the program for themselves, ensuring that participants freely exchange their personal experiences and ideas without any assumptions that there are right answers. In the case of the Reboot Summit, the task is answering three fundamental convening questions:

It is hoped that "Rebooters" will take this exploration further and generate new, innovative projects that "reboot" Jewish cultural and religious traditions to engage larger audiences in exploring Jewish identity and community on their own.



Who am I?

What am I inheriting?

What, if anything, do I want to do about it?

Participants at the Summit include new members, members who are returning for a second consecutive year, and faculty. The size of the entire Summit group ranges from 60–70 participants.

KEY QUESTIONS

The Jim Joseph Foundation, a major funder of Reboot, sought to evaluate the Reboot network and explore how Reboot can manage its continuing evolution to achieve increased impact in years to come. Given the specific focus on networks, this evaluation does not include an examination of Reboot's impact on the hundreds of thousands of people reached through its numerous projects and products. Rather, this inquiry sought to answer the following questions:

01 To what extent and how has Reboot had an impact on its members?

02 What impact does the Reboot network have on Rebooters' broader community of friends and colleagues and on the Jewish organizational landscape?

03 What factors shape Rebooter outcomes?

04 Is Reboot succeeding in building a strong community of young Jewish thought leaders?

FINDINGS

This evaluation process led to five findings that bring the Reboot network into focus.

General Finding:

The Reboot network is a robust, complex, thoughtfully designed, and evolving network. It has been effective at engaging otherwise unconnected young Jews and initiating a conversation between them about identity, community, and meaning that is reaching deeply into the broader Jewish community. Now, the Reboot network is entering a new stage in its life, with opportunities for increased impact and some risks to anticipate and manage.

1. Caring & Learning About Being Jewish

Reboot's most general impact on its members is the personal discovery that they care about their Jewishness (culturally and/or religiously):

- 86% of survey respondents reported that Reboot had an impact on how they feel or think about themselves as a Jew.
- 70% of respondents reported significant pre-Summit Jewish experiences, yet only 30% said that before Summit being Jewish was "very important" to them. When asked about the period since Summit, 65% said that being Jewish was "very important" to them.
- 79% said it either was "true for me" or "somewhat true" that Reboot was "a bridge back to Jewish experience I can relate to" or had led to "renewed interest in the ritual and spiritual component of Judaism."
- More than half of respondents said that since attending Summit, they had done more "Jewish things" with others, including talking about being/doing Jewish and initiating celebrations linked to the Jewish calendar.

"For me a real turning point — and Reboot helped me discover this — was that Judaism is a work in progress and can be reinterpreted in new ways. That was an eye-opening moment."

"Most Rebooters would never be involved in the Jewish conversation or in Jewish communal life. And Reboot says, 'Come into this room and look around. This could be interesting, don't miss it.' "

Rebooters consistently demonstrate a desire to "pass it on."

- At least 101 Rebooters have been involved in creating one of Reboot's successful projects:

A large proportion of Rebooters believe that Reboot is not just about them.

- Reflecting on Reboot's effect on Jewishness or a Jewish cultural renaissance, 84% of survey respondents said that Reboot will have a significant impact.

"I see Reboot sort of like I do the Velvet Underground, at least as far as the sentiment that the VU only ever had 1,000 fans, but all those fans had influential bands of their own… Reboot's potential for influence is massive."

2. Generating Jewish Innovations

Reboot is generating innovations in Jewish life with numerous mass-audience projects. Beyond those projects, Reboot's "production process" has evolved and Rebooters have been creating and engaging in other ways.

- **Building Local Rebooter Networks —** Rebooters have organized their own networks in Los Angeles, New York, and San Francisco where the majority of the 348 members in the Reboot network live.

- **Pioneering Local Communities of Jewish Practice —** Rebooters are leading or supporting the development of engaging local religious and cultural entities. For instance, in Los Angeles, Rebooters started East Side Jews and helped start Ikar, both of which engage Rebooters and non-Rebooters alike.

- **Engaging Mainstream Jewish Organizations —** A number of Rebooters now consult or work for mainstream Jewish organizations, often to provide expertise about connecting with young Jews.

3. Factors That Affect Rebooter Journeys

There is no typical Rebooter experience. However, close examination of Rebooters' Jewish journeys suggests that some factors in Reboot's control can be managed to amplify its effectiveness.

- **Second Summit Attendance —** There is a lot to absorb at Summit and a second turn, in consecutive years, allows Rebooters to get more out of the experience. For those who return, attendance at a second Summit correlates with outcomes including increased confidence in Jewish knowledge and practice and greater self-reported curiosity, engagement, and empowerment related to Jewish experience.

- **Pre-Reboot Jewish Experiences —** Rebooters who did not have earlier Jewish experiences, such as becoming a Bar/Bat Mitzvah or attending a Jewish day school, were more likely than other Rebooters to have a range of Jewish learning outcomes after Summit. In other words, one of Reboot's contributions is in initiating a Jewish journey for those who had been previously disconnected from their Jewish identity or from a practice of Jewish life.

- **Network Effects —** Activity in Reboot peer settings and mentoring from a core group of Reboot board members, faculty, and increasingly by fellow Rebooters, are powerful drivers of Rebooter outcomes. Participation in creating a Reboot project and the impetus to share Reboot effects with people outside the network correlate strongly with Rebooter's engagement with the organization.

4. Rebooter Connection

As Rebooters connect with each other, the network is taking on a distinct structure.

- A committed core of well-linked "central hub" members have direct connections with large numbers of other Rebooters and can easily reach many other people in the network

- "Clusters" in each of the three main cities

- "Boundary spanners" who link the network nationally

> "I felt like these are people that I could relate to and I felt like they were hidden from me previously within the context of the Jewish community."

fig 1. Visualization of the Reboot network and its structure

The evaluation also revealed a number of other interesting findings about Rebooter connections.

- There is a substantial amount of connectivity across cohort years.
- Multi-purpose ties are stronger. Some Rebooters connect with each other outside of Reboot activities for multiple purposes (social and professional activities, celebrations linked to the Jewish calendar and Shabbat, etc).
- Patterns of connectivity in the three main cities exhibit distinct characteristics. For example, New York Rebooters form sub-clusters, often by neighborhood (e.g., Brooklyn, Manhattan), while the LA network is the densest of the local networks, likely due to the shared professional interests of many LA Rebooters and effective network organizing.

5. A Larger Ecology of Jewish Life

Rebooters' unique talents, business acumen, and cultural creativity enable them to grow and contribute to a larger landscape of innovative Jewish networks and to communal organizations. Reboot plays a unique role in bringing that vibrant energy to bear by sparking new feelings, thinking, ideas, collaborations, and projects among young Jews.

- Of Rebooters who said they had connected with a Jewish organization or institution in the last 6 months, 69% had become a lay leader or board member; 28% became a member or congregant and 20% had taken formal employment with and/or planned a Reboot-inspired event with a Jewish organization.
- 41% of surveyed Rebooters said that it was true or somewhat true that since Summit, "A light bulb went off: I should do more in the Jewish community."

Many Rebooters engage in other networks and organizations — locally, nationally, and even internationally — that play roles in Jewish religious, cultural, and social justice innovation.

"It is about creating permission for people within the community to feel empowered to go ahead and make the changes and do the things to impact their religion in their community and not just wait for someone else to do it."

RECOMMENDATIONS

Though this evaluation primarily sought to examine Reboot's past and the network's current structure, questions and curiosity about Reboot's future inevitably arose through the interviews, surveys, and focus groups.

01 How big should Reboot become?

02 What should Reboot do in other cities?

03 How can Reboot inspire more Summit participants to create Reboot projects?

04 Should Reboot devote its resources to project creation or building the network?

After 10 years, the Reboot network has entered a transitional stage in which increasing its impact cannot rely entirely on past approaches. The Jewish innovation landscape is changing. Reboot will need to adapt to continue to broaden adoption of Jewish innovation and to compete for resources, talent, and funding in this changing environment.

Reboot's staff has introduced Reboot projects to hundreds of mainstream organizational leaders. This effort seems to be paying off in the larger community, as Rebooters report that leaders in mainstream Jewish organizations are receptive to Reboot innovations and that young, non-Reboot Jews are interested in participating in Reboot and Reboot projects.

In recognition of these developments and the findings of this evaluation, Network Impact offered four general recommendations for Reboot's future evolution.

Let Reboot Continue to be Reboot

Reboot could follow many paths. However, moving on new possibilities that divert Reboot from its founding purpose as a self-organizing platform for Jewish innovation would be a mistake. Pursuing programming that strays far beyond the network's core competence would risk turning Reboot into a top-down organization that serves its members rather than a bottom-up network whose members serve each other and the broader public.

At the same time, Reboot could strive to be an enabler of others in Jewish innovation by serving as a source of ideas, talent, energy, connections, and products that constructively helps other Jewish entities. Doing otherwise might ignore the existence of other innovative Jewish organizations and networks that have emerged alongside Reboot. As a result, instead of defining itself as a unique element of this ecology, Reboot could define itself as a foundational element.

Leverage Network Strengths

Reboot has evolved into a complex network with significant potential to spread ideas, foster innovations, cultivate communities, and create products that reach wider audiences. Connections among network members shape Reboot outcomes by creating pathways and environments for ongoing collaboration. Over time, some useful configurations have formed within the network that can be leveraged to further strengthen peer exchange.

- Network hubs and network weavers — Engage "central hub" members to serve as intentional "network weavers" to engage less-connected members and strengthen member connections and participation.

- Strong ties and clusters — Foster and leverage the strong ties formed among a core group of Rebooters through their connections outside of Reboot activities. Nurture a city-based network culture and clusters of strongly-connected Rebooters who might collaborate in innovation.

- Build on emerging expertise — Leverage "nodes of expertise" within the network (Rebooters who have keen insight into how to weave network ties). This can help connect Rebooters to each other rather than to Reboot staff for mentoring, advice, and learning. A potential benefit would be an increase in the number of Rebooters who understand and adopt Reboot's methodology to create new communities of Jewish innovation and practice.

Experiment With More Diversity

Reboot should experiment with more diversity in its membership and methodology. Networks seeking to produce innovations tend to feast on diversity (of members' talent, skills, point of view, experience, etc.) because innovation is usually a process of combining elements that have not been brought together before.

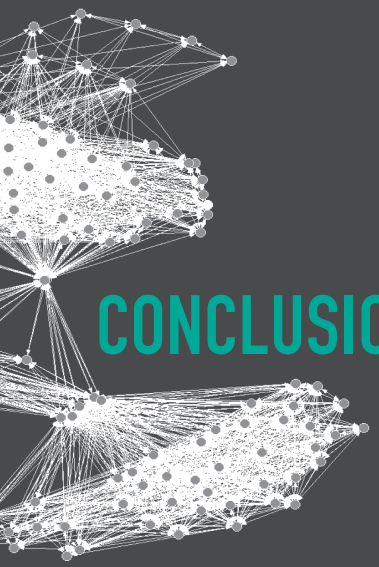
- Increase diversity of network participants — Media and arts professionals are not necessarily the only ones positioned to invent and implement the innovative projects, local networks, and organizations that Reboot's future

demands. Reboot should look to incorporate young cultural creatives with other skills and experience (e.g., architects, urban planners, chefs, environmentalists).

- Diversify Reboot's methodology — Reboot has focused on a peer-to-peer "transformative" process, at Summit and local gatherings, for personal discoveries and subsequent actions. In addition, Reboot has developed a small grants fund to help seed innovation. Reboot should experiment with new methods to continue to stimulate innovation by a growing generation of young Jews. Experiments might include the use of a Request for Proposals (RFP) model, a prize model with cash awards, or experiments in "open-source" innovation.

Get More Impact by Partnering

Reboot is beginning to create a set of partnerships that could function as a national distribution system, providing young Jews with easy access to a wide range of Jewish innovations. Reboot could continue to develop partnerships with innovative, place-based Jewish religious and cultural institutions — some created and supported by Rebooters — to support the spread of innovative practices and institutions.



CONCLUSION

Reboot has been able to build a strong, self-organizing network that has engaged young Jews on the margins of Jewish life, inspiring many of them to engage others in an exploration of Jewish identity and community.

In its next stage, Reboot has an opportunity to continue to build partnerships, experiment with the diversity of its membership and methods, and leverage the network's strengths in a way that will allow it to become a more fundamental element in the ecology of Jewish innovation.

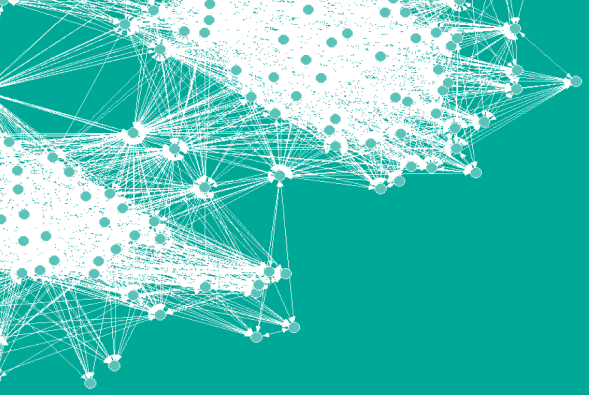
It will be a unique enabler with widespread impact, helping to turn what one Rebooter called "the Jewish community's focus on its own erosion" into "a panoply of really exciting Jewish manifestations, a genuine cultural and generational renaissance."

Evaluation Methods:

The network evaluation was led by Madeleine Taylor & Peter Plastrik of Network Impact. During late 2010 and 2011, their research process included:

Focus Groups:	Three focus groups with a total of 24 Rebooters in Los Angeles, New York, and San Francisco.
Interviews:	The largest Rebooter survey to date (144 responses – 40% of all 348 Rebooters who have participated since 2003).
Event Data:	In-depth confidential interviews with 23 Rebooters, staff, and faculty (academics, rabbis, and facilitators who provide Jewish content and expertise).
Connectivity Maps:	Creating the first-ever "maps" of connectivity across the Rebooter network.
Survey:	Integrating attendance data for 47 local Reboot events.
Follow-Up Connection Survey:	More detailed information about connections between Rebooters outside of Reboot activities (96 respondents).

We would like to thank the following people who were instrumental in the planning, process and completion of this evaluation: Scott Belsky, Roger Bennett, Lou Cove, Chip Edelsberg, Shane Hankins,David Katznelson, Amelia Klein, Rachel Levin, Melissa McCullough, Pete Plastrik, Adene Sacks, Yoav Schlesinger, Madeleine Taylor, and all the members of the Reboot network who participated in the surveys, interviews and focus groups.



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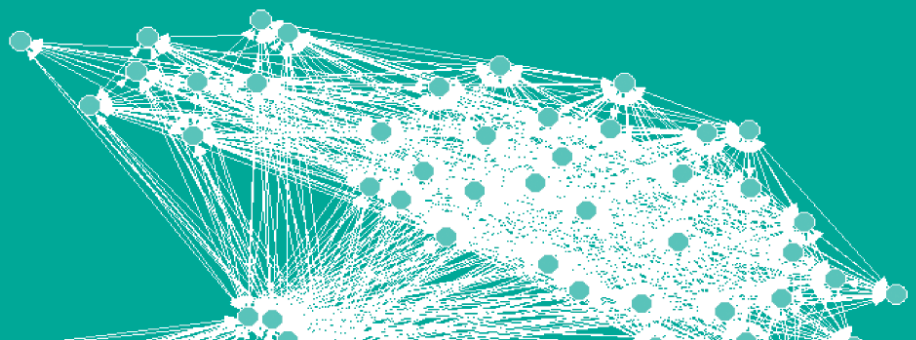
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