What is your city of origin? How long have you lived in Denver?

I'm from El Paso, Tex. and lived in Austin (Hook 'em Horns) and Chicago before moving to Denver one year ago, and I love it!

The words “strategist” and “influencer” have been used to describe you. Do you consider yourself a strategist and an influencer?

I do consider myself a strategist since I'm always putting the who, what, where, why and how puzzle pieces together when developing a new marketing program or way to bring people, places and products together.

Strategists set direction, generate ideas and are resourceful in figuring out how to get from where we are now to where we want to be with a vision or goal. I'm fortunate to work professionally as a marketing strategy manager at Salesforce where I develop new strategies for how to improve our customer experience with our technology products.

An “influencer” has come to be known as someone who builds a personal brand and builds a community, often with social media followers, to influence purchasing, and maybe even lifestyle, decisions. While many influencers write blogs, as do I, I'm not a typical influencer, who represents products, blogs, as do I, I'm not a typical influencer who represents products, maybe even lifestyle, decisions.

Your personal brand and builds a community...what's your key to success?

I've always been interested in catching jingles and branding, so going into business and marketing was a natural fit. I'm half-creative, half-process driven, so it's a great mix of both.

Please tell us something about “The Knock Method.”

My newest project is a five-step methodology I authored that is a new take on networking — one that is long-term and mutually beneficial rather than a business card exchange. It's designed to help career growers (professionals), career builders (students and recent graduates), and career changers (those changing professions) learn how to build positive career relationships like mentoring.

Over 200 professionals and students have been trained on The Knock Method, including at Denver’s Mt. Calvary Resource Center and JEWISHcolorado’s Tribe Engagement Network (TEN), and it's just getting started.

How important is personal connectivity? Why is this something that people today need assistance with?

Personal connectivity is at the root of everything I do. My life purpose is to bring people together; whether around a dinner table, through learning workshops or in the workplace.

I've identified a gap in education and resources that develops soft skills like how to reach out to someone in a leadership position at a company, or a recruiter for a possible job, or how to nurture professional relationships that may grow into more formal mentoring.

What are your personal and professional goals with “The RebeccaReachments” and the various other roles you fill?

The RebeccaReachments started as a blog 10 years ago, and it has evolved into a website where I share my “Reachancements” on bringing people together, including entertaining, cooking, recipes and career and travel tips. It's one of my fun hobbies.

Why this profession?

While many influencers write blogs, as do I, I'm not a typical influencer who represents products, maybe even lifestyle, decisions.

My latest hobby is long-term and mutually beneficial rather than a business card exchange. It's designed to help career growers (professionals), career builders (students and recent graduates), and career changers (those changing professions) learn how to build positive career relationships like mentoring.

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The story of Neal Price's half a century of communal service, mainly at HEA

Neal Price started as a student Zionist leader at CU in 1969. He evolved into a highly competent, respected community leader and servant. 

Neal Price, steady & bold

As Neal retires, we will celebrate over four decades of work in the Denver Jewish Community at an event on February 9th at The House. This day in June, 1993, at the old HEA at 1555 Stuart St. on the West Side.

Michele and Neal Price on their wedding day in June, 1981, at the old HEA at 1555 Stuart St. on the West Side.

Neal Price started as a student Zionist leader at CU in 1969. He was looking to move up. In 1976, he was tapped as the first executive director of Rodef Shalom, where he earned retirement.

At that point, Price was the father of three small children. He was looking to move up. In 1976, he was tapped as the first executive director of Rodef Shalom, where he worked for the JCC, running its day camp in Parker in the summers and Judaic family programming during the school year; for two years.

He explains: "One of the things the HEA had promised Rabbi Goldberger was, unlike Rabbi (Manuel) Lademann, who did everything, they would get him an executive director. Rabbi Goldberger knew me and one thing we did was, there was a great deal of pressure to allow mixed seating. In fact, in December 1980, just before I came, the congregation had voted overwhelmingly to allow mixed seating. My first job was how to figure out how to do mixed seating for Shabbat, but still allow for a men's only section and a ladies' only section. And that year would be the first year they would have mixed seating for the High Holidays." 

"The first challenge, I remember distinctly. Most rows had 13 seats. In general, everyone wanted to keep their seats, but also wanted their spouses to be with them. I would say, 'I can't get 26 people into 13 seats.' The congregation president was Angie Cook, and Phil Cohen was also an officer. Together, we were able to figure it out." 

Because of this, however, HEA, then an Orthodox synagogue, was given permission to go back to separate seating or leaving the Orthodox Union ("OU"), "so we left the OU!"

When Price first started, HEA had 400 families. Even though Rabbi Goldberger hadn't been an active pulpit rabbi for a decade — he was still extremely active in the Jewish community, and he was well-liked.

"During Rabbi Goldberger's early years on the West Side," Price recalls, "about 300 families joined the HEA, so we grew to over 700 families there. These were primarily empty-nesters, in their late 50s to late 60s, who didn't have to worry about schlepping their kids to religious school during the week."

After Rabbi Goldberger had been at HEA approximately 10 years, however, the handwriting was on the wall. The congregation was getting older. People were passing away or moving to warmer climates. HEA knew it had to move to survive, but Rabbi Goldberger was very honest. He was in his late 50s at the time and didn't have the strength or desire to raise funds, build a building and move. He offered to retire, but the board held Rabbi Goldberger in such high esteem that they told him to retire when he was ready.

We were a few years later. The congregation was almost out of money and membership had dropped to below 400 households again.

At that juncture, in 1994, HEA voted overwhelmingly to become a Conservative congregation and affiliate with the national Conservative board, United Synagogue. He hired a very young Rabbi Bruce Dillin, who was up for the challenges of moving the congregation from the West Side to southeast Denver.

As Neal retires, we welcome Laura Inrlen as our new CEO. Neal will be working with Laura in the month of November to pass the baton to a new leader of the congregation. We wish Laura all the best of luck.

As Neal retires, we wish to express our thanks to Neal for all he has done for the HEA and the community. He has been a true leader, a friend and a mentor to many of us. We wish him all the best in his retirement.

L'shalom,
Rabbi Bruce Dillin

Neal Price is planning on more days like this with his wife Michele as he retires after nearly 39 years at his high-pressure job.

"One of the things the HEA had promised Rabbi Goldberger was, unlike Rabbi (Manuel) Lademann, who did everything, they would get him an executive director. Rabbi Goldberger knew me and one thing we did was, there was a great deal of pressure to allow mixed seating. In fact, in December 1980, just before I came, the congregation had voted overwhelmingly to allow mixed seating. My first job was how to figure out how to do mixed seating for Shabbat, but still allow for a men's only section and a ladies' only section. And that year would be the first year they would have mixed seating for the High Holidays." 

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After Nov. 30, Neal Price will be able to remain seated in the pews during Shabbat services at HEA, rather than running around checking on things.

Between them, they have five children and seven grandchildren: Levi (Ginger Licht), Price and daughter-in-law Jordan (Rachel) Yarus and son Benjamin of Houston; Mikki (Dave) Scott and children Emerson and Elanna in Denver; Mikki’s brother, Rabbi Martin Goldstein, and Cantor [Martin] Goldstein, and we had a certain niche, name- ly, we were a traditional congregation with a traditional service, but we allowed women on the bimah; so girls could have a full-fledged Saturday morning Hat Mitzvah, and I think that became very attractive to a lot of families.”

Even though Price’s title — executive director — has not changed in thirty-eight-and-a-half years, the job changed dramatically over the years.

In the beginning, HEA had a small staff, and Price was basically a one-man operation; he did everything from administration to program planning to publicity.

“The congregation grew, the staffing grew and my responsibilities changed. I took on more supervisory types of positions as opposed to everything being hands-on.”

Along the road, Price also picked up a part-time gig as administrator of Golden Hill Cemetery. At one point, Price administered the cemetery as part of his job at HEA, which does not own the cemetery. When his expanded responsibilities at HEA precluded Price from administering Golden Hill, Price asked permission from both the HEA and Golden Hill boards to moonlight and administer the cemetery from home on his day off. He’s been doing that for two decades now and intends to continue after his retirement from HEA.

Price has also been highly active in his professional association as past president of NAASE, North American Association of Synagogue Executives. He is certified by NAASE as a Fellow in Synagogue Administration (FSA) and as an Amin Tzibur (ATz).

Real Price is proud of his career as a synagogue executive, but he is ready to retire.

“I work a six-day week. Monday’s my day off, unless it’s a holiday. Primarily, the reason I want to retire at this time is a slow week is 50 hours and I sometimes work up to 60 hours.”

Actually, Price is almost always on the job. “I can compartmentalize some things, but you can’t leave it at the door. I get lots of phone calls. I find that on Monday, which is my day off, if I don’t check my emails, I’ll come in Tuesday and I’ll have 150 emails to go through.”

He wants to be able to spend more time with his wife, children and grandchildren.

Price has been married to Michele, for 26 years. Among the first moves they made together was to buy a house near the site of the building and put down roots in a community. Between them, they have five children and seven grandchildren: Levi (Ginger Licht), Price and daughter-in-law Jordan (Rachel) Yarus and son Benjamin of Houston; Mikki (Dave) Scott and children Emerson and Elanna in Denver; Mikki’s brother, Rabbi Martin Goldstein, and Cantor [Martin] Goldstein, and we had a certain niche, namely, we were a traditional congregation with a traditional service, but we allowed women on the bimah; so girls could have a full-fledged Saturday morning Hat Mitzvah, and I think that became very attractive to a lot of families.”

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