

**The Bill Blackwood  
Law Enforcement Management Institute of Texas**

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**Recruiting, Hiring, and Retaining Generation X Employees**

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**An Administrative Research Paper  
Submitted in Partial Fulfillment  
Required for Graduation from the  
Leadership Command College**

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October, 2005**

## **ABSTRACT**

Throughout the nation, law enforcement agencies have experienced difficulties recruiting, hiring, and retaining qualified Generation X employees. The purpose of this research is to determine what concessions law enforcement can make to traditional standards in order to successfully attract, employ, and retain members of this generation as law enforcement professionals. Review of available literature pertaining to Generation X was conducted. A written survey instrument was also administered to recruits attending law enforcement academies in order to gain an idea of what traditions or practices should be evaluated for possible change. Findings indicated that improvement may be experienced by implementing changes based on an understanding of the perspectives and expectations of members of Generation X. Research revealed that implementing change can enhance the satisfaction and stability of Generation X officers, leading to improved recruitment and retention efforts for agencies. The public also stands to benefit from the services of a more professional, well-balanced, valued law enforcement officer and agency.

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## INTRODUCTION

Throughout the nation, law enforcement agencies have experienced difficulties recruiting, hiring, and retaining qualified Generation X employees. According to Jurkiewicz (2000), Generation X is a term referring to individuals born between 1963 and 1981. The members of this generation comprise 20% of the overall U.S. workforce and 32.4% of the public and nonprofit sector workforce. “The greatest percentage of new police officers comes from a group of 52 million Americans born between 1963 and 1977 referred to as Generation X” (Tulgan, 1997 as cited by Reiter, 1999, p.3). Members of this generation are often misunderstood by law enforcement administrators and supervisors. Their abilities are underestimated, their loyalty is questioned, and the value of the Generation X employee to the police organization is often overlooked or ignored. According to Webb (2000), law enforcement administrators are frequently confused and angered with this generation of new officers. This animosity usually occurs because administrators and supervisors have not taken the time to learn what makes the Generation X officers think and act the way they do.

Contemplating the perspectives and expectations of Generation X can make it easier to understand why the structured, authoritarian field of law enforcement has experienced difficulty recruiting, hiring, and retaining Generation X officers. The purpose of this research is to answer the question: What concessions can law enforcement make to traditional standards in order to successfully attract, employ, and retain members of this generation as law enforcement professionals? The method of inquiry for this research will include review of professional journals, periodicals, articles, books, and Internet resources. A written survey will be given to police recruits who are attending several regional law enforcement academies. The information received from the literary research will be used to show law enforcement agencies successful

strategies for recruiting, understanding, and retaining Generation X employees. The written survey is expected to give insight into the expectations of Generation X recruits who are interested in law enforcement as an employment opportunity.

It is anticipated that law enforcement will have to adapt to the rapidly changing job market. Changes should be made to some traditional methods of marketing and recruiting, training, assigning jobs, leadership and management styles, and employee evaluation methods. Doing so will assist law enforcement agencies in competing with the private business industry for qualified candidates. The implications of this research will affect law enforcement agencies, officers, and the public they serve. Although law enforcement may have to change time-honored traditions, methodology, and leadership styles in order to compete with private industry, the profession will benefit by gaining insight into effective employment and retention strategies. If changes are implemented, law enforcement agencies may experience fewer personnel problems, a lower turn over rate, and higher employee satisfaction, all of which may lead to a greater number of qualified, experienced, satisfied officers working within the department. The officers will benefit from better leadership, enhanced morale, more training, more input, and a satisfying career that meets their expectations. The public will benefit by receiving services from a diversified, professional, talented generation of officers who are qualified to do the job and see law enforcement as a career path instead of a stepping-stone.

## **REVIEW OF LITERATURE**

Recruiting and hiring qualified employees in the law enforcement field is often a taxing and difficult process. Mineard (2003) discusses the trends and developments in the process of recruiting and retaining Generation X employees in law enforcement agencies. In his research, he concludes that one of the biggest problems law enforcement has faced in recent years is the

declining number of qualified candidates applying for jobs, which is in sharp contrast to the numbers of people applying or testing for entry-level positions, as early as ten years ago. Because of the legal liabilities of the profession, most law enforcement agencies require applicants to pass extensive background checks, polygraph tests, and psychological exams, as well as written and physical fitness tests before they are considered for employment. This extensive process, in and of itself, has a tendency to limit the pool of qualified recruits, which has already been on the decline, even though the unemployment rate has been at its lowest point in years.

According to Charrier (2000), law enforcement agencies should take a close look at sociological and demographic information when developing or revising their marketing strategies. He suggests that administrators should also know the motivations and concerns of Generation X officers, because these officers, as well as those seeking jobs have the ability and opportunity to...“shop around for the police agency that best meets their needs”(p. 46). He concludes that this situation is not likely to change in the near future. Because these candidates are more likely to shop around for agencies that meet their individual needs, Charrier also concludes that law enforcement agencies should focus recruitment efforts on the Internet and television, because many X'ers turn to these outlets for news, entertainment, and job information.

Due to the dangerous nature of the job, the legal aspects of the profession, vicarious liabilities, and the vast array of tasks an officer must be able to perform, training new officers is time-consuming, expensive, and vitally important to the success of the officer and the agency. Once hired and trained, an agency has invested numerous man hours and taxpayer dollars in the employee without experiencing a positive return on the investment until the officer hits the street

and performs the job. Many law enforcement agencies spend countless hours and funds training recruits during the academy at the beginning of their careers, but fail to provide more than the state-mandated minimum training requirements once the officer is through the initial training program and officially off probation. Gradually, increasing numbers of law enforcement agencies are requiring applicants to have a college education, yet Mineard (2003) suggests that law enforcement often overlooks the value of the individual officer's education once that officer is hired. He writes that most Generation X employees want to pursue further education, only to realize that in many instances, the training is neither offered nor encouraged. He concludes that the individual officer's abilities and skills are not utilized. Furthermore, the failure to take into account the individual's interests and provide additional training is a disservice to the employee. Training serves as a means to keep the employee informed and interested in the job. Mineard also indicates that the employee's previous education should be utilized to the extent possible. He estimates that many command staff have no idea of the educational background of their employees, nor what their career interests are. He suggests that management should utilize career background and interest questionnaires to determine what the employee is interested in and what the employee has to offer the agency

The ability to understand, lead, and retain these new "Generation X" officers in today's ever-changing, highly competitive job market presents another entirely different, and often difficult challenge to many law enforcement administrators. This difficult challenge has lead researchers to seek answers to questions concerning this generation. What sets this generation apart from previous generations? Why do these employees have a different work ethic than older generations? What do they expect from their employer in order to satisfy their needs? Much of the research has been remarkably consistent. Farren (2003) states that there has been a

noticeable change in the work ethic of Generation X employees, as opposed to those that were born in the Baby Boomer Generation (1943 – 1960). He notes that the work ethic instilled in Baby Boomers was one that most law enforcement administrators admired and were pleased with: long term commitment to the job, obedience, and a sense of duty. The Baby Boomer Generation gave law enforcement and the private industry employees that routinely stayed on the job for 20 to 40 years. Farren also noted that the Baby Boomers grew up working for and learning their work ethic from the Veteran Generation (born between 1922 and 1942). He noted that the Veteran Generation was heavily impacted by growing up in a time when there was a strong military and federal government presence. Because this generation was heavily impacted by World War II, Farren suggests that the Veteran Generation understands the traditional paramilitary structure of law enforcement organizations and the workplace, as it exists today.

On the other hand, Charrier (2000) describes Generation X as a group of individuals that grew up during a time of peace, noting that not one member of this generation has been drafted into the military. This was also a period of prosperity, during which many technological advances changed the American economy. Charrier also notes that many X'ers have mastered the computer and they describe themselves as being self reliant, results-oriented, and skilled at multi-tasking. He concludes that this generation desires immediate and personal feedback. They want a better balance between their home life and their career compared to what their parent(s) achieved. Because of this desire, they are more willing to sacrifice some success at the job in order to have more time with their family or to pursue their personal interests.

According to Mineard (2003), Generation X officers were raised with a new sense of self and a different sense of the role of authority. They began developing their life and work ethic during the 1960s and 1970s when there was a tremendous change in the way people dealt with

authority, viewed their role in society, and saw the status of work in their lives. During this period, people began to openly question authority figures, as well as employers. Being raised during this period, Generation X applicants are more apt to seek employment opportunities that provide flexible work schedules because they value their time off. They want their work to compliment their life. To that note, they want to actively participate in their work role and are often willing to relocate to find a job that enables them to do so, while at the same time offering flexibility.

Supervisors and training officers have indeed discovered that many X'ers do not simply accept authority without asking questions. Most law enforcement agencies are set up as paramilitary organizations, with a clearly defined chain of command and rank structure, in order to facilitate the flow of information from top to bottom and vice versa, to enforce the rules and regulations, and to establish and maintain discipline. Although the authoritarian, paramilitary structure utilized by most law enforcement agencies has worked well with previous generations, it sometimes causes conflict with X'ers, who are more apt to question decisions, assignments, work conditions, and management issues. They are accustomed to immediate feedback on a continual basis. They have grown up during a period where results come quickly, because of improved technology. Microwave ovens, remote control television sets, CD players, digital cameras, computers, the Internet, video games, and cell phones, are just a few examples of items X'ers grew up using. One only has to watch a major news network to see the vast amounts of information that are given simultaneously to the reporter's story. Sports scores, the weather, stock market reports, and additional news information are constantly streaming across the screen while the news anchor is relaying another topic of information. X'ers have the need to receive, and the ability to absorb all of this information simultaneously. They quickly filter out the

information that is unwanted or not useful to them. X'ers are comfortable with technology such as computers and the Internet. They use them to retrieve or send information rapidly. Because X'ers are accustomed to receiving answers, feedback, and information without having to wait, older generation co-workers, training officers, supervisors and administrators often view them as being impatient, rude, and disrespectful. Mineard (2003) describes the tendencies of Generation X officers, emphasizing that they will openly question the way things are done, skipping the chain of command if necessary to receive answers. He suggests that they do this, not to be difficult, but because of their desire to receive information quickly, coupled with their need to participate in the decision making process, noting that years ago, these decisions were only made by management. Mineard concludes that often times, agencies do not react well to this questioning, and as a result of others misunderstanding their perspectives, Generation X officers often move to a different agency or leave the law enforcement profession entirely. As a result, agencies are constantly involved in the expensive process of hiring, training, and trying to retain new employees.

In his research, Charrier (2000) also concluded that members of this generation often question authority, and are not usually intimidated by authority. He suggested that in order to attract the best qualified candidates, police administrators would need to reevaluate policies and leadership styles because young employees often have difficulties with police supervisors who adhere to an autocratic style of leadership. Charrier recognized that the law enforcement culture is structured around a quasi-military philosophy and may be threatened by a new management style based on openness and participation, which is what Generation X officers desire.

Members of this generation are often perceived as being self-centered, lazy, disloyal, malcontents, who have no respect for traditions or rules. X'ers have been characterized as being

materialistic and cynical, quick to jump from job to job in search of more money, or at the first sign that their individual needs are not the focus of attention. Barnett (2001) concludes that Generation X employees tend to see every job as a temporary stepping-stone to something better or different. They believe that job security comes from the transferability of their skills to other jobs, rather than from advancement through the ranks of an organization. According to Foley and LeFevre (2002), “Many Xers grew up watching their parents work long hours for one company only to be downsized into unemployment. As a result, most members of Generation X do not believe in job security, instead, accepting job instability as a natural characteristic of employment. This observation has created a ‘look out for yourself and move on’ attitude toward jobs and careers” (p. 2).

Charrier (2000) reported that members of this generation expect their jobs to be flexible, challenging, and stimulating. He found that they tend to respond better to a teamwork style of management where the employee has the opportunity to provide input and the manager provides coaching or mentoring while delegating tasks. Charrier concluded that an X’ers least favorite working environment is highly structured and controlled by authority. He states that, “X’ers typically are not impressed by authority or a management structure that does not encourage employee input or teamwork. Keep in mind that few will have had any military experience. As a group, they look more favorably on competence than rank alone” (p. 47). Foley and LeFevre (2000) wrote, “Generation Xers show little deference to authority figures. This may be a direct result of the unstructured homes they lived in as children” (p. 3).

In his research on the benefits of empowerment and teamwork in law enforcement organizations, Reiter (1999), in opposition to the conventional stereotype of Generation X officers, argued that most of these officers are not inherently “bad apples” who have no desire to

perform the job at hand. He suggests that administrators should pay attention to the skills and potential that each employee possesses. He contends the agency's responsibility is to establish a working environment that enables each employee to reach his or her potential. He further concludes that the rigid, traditional paramilitary model of policing frequently fails in this regard.

Much of the previous research conducted on Generation X officers is similar, in that it indicates that law enforcement, in general, has experienced difficulty understanding the challenges presented by Generation X. Trends in available literature indicate that in order to compete with private industry, law enforcement will have to reevaluate current methods of recruitment, training, leadership, management, and organization, in order to effectively hire and retain members of this generation. Literary research clearly indicates that Generation X views employment differently than previous generations. Law enforcement must gain an understanding of this generation's views and needs in order to create a work environment that enables the profession to benefit from their talents, while at the same time, providing the officer with a satisfying career path.

## **METHODOLOGY**

What does the law enforcement profession need to do in order to successfully attract, employ, and retain qualified members of Generation X? It is hypothesized that law enforcement, in general, needs to change traditional methods of marketing and recruiting in order to attract and employ qualified candidates in the first place. It is also anticipated that law enforcement will need to gain an understanding of what these candidates expect and need from their employer in order to retain them once they are hired. Areas that might require changes to increase retention include training, job assignment methods, leadership and internal structuring, and employee evaluation methods.

The method of inquiry involved the review of available literature, including books, research papers, professional journals, periodicals, and the Internet. A measurement instrument in the form of a written survey was developed and administered to recruits attending area law enforcement academies in the Texas Panhandle. Ten of the nineteen written survey questions were developed by the members of the Florida Department of Law Enforcement - Senior Leadership Class 5, as part of a previously published survey that was administered to a group of criminology students from Florida State University (Brand, 1999). The remaining nine questions in the written survey instrument were developed by the author of this research paper.

In January 2005, ninety-two written surveys were given to recruits attending the Panhandle Regional Law Enforcement Academy at Amarillo College, and the Amarillo Police Academy at the Amarillo Police Department. Both Academies are located in Amarillo, Texas. Eighty-six of the surveys were returned, resulting in a ninety-three percent response rate to the survey. Of the eighty-six surveys returned, sixty-three of them were completed by members of Generation X (born 1963 – 1981). Overall, Generation X recruits attending the two separate academies accounted for seventy-three percent of all respondents surveyed. The study group consisted of the responses received from the sixty-three Generation X recruits. The survey instrument utilized a Likert scale for quantitative analysis. The Likert scale listed the following values for the first seventeen questions on the written survey: 1-Strongly Disagree; 2-Disagree; 3-No Opinion; 4-Agree; 5-Strongly Agree. For these seventeen questions, the survey focused on employment benefits, leadership and management styles, and personal expectations or beliefs. The last two questions on the survey dealt with job performance evaluations and recruitment methods. The information received was analyzed by determining the percentages of the survey group that agreed or disagreed with the statements in the survey instrument. These percentages

will offer insight into the expectations and needs of this generation, thus giving law enforcement an idea of what areas should be evaluated for possible change.

## **FINDINGS**

Previous research has clearly revealed that Generation X has presented a dilemma for law enforcement administrators who are not willing or able to understand this generation's perspectives or needs. It is only natural that members of Generation X are different from members of older generations. Barnett (2001) concludes that Xers have different expectations of the future, based on their different perceptions of the past and present. Over the past few years, there has been a steady decline in the number of qualified candidates applying for employment in the law enforcement field. There has been a noticeable shift in the work ethic of today's employee. Generation X employees grew up during a period where they gained a new sense of self, and a different view on the role of authority. Many members of this generation were "latch key kids". They learned at an early age to be independent, while their parents were off at work, demonstrating their dedication and loyalty to the job. In many instances, X'ers watched their parents dedicate more time to the job than to the family, working numerous years for one company, only to be laid off before being able to experience the benefits of retirement. Generation X does not necessarily want to follow the example of their parents. They want to spend more time with their families. To this note, they pay close attention to benefits such as flexible work schedules. Many agencies are exploring 10 and 12-hour shifts, which allow more time off, or shifts that rotate in order to allow employees to get some weekends off. X'ers grew up in the information age; therefore, they are accustomed to immediate feedback. They can receive and disseminate large amounts of information rapidly. They are accustomed to utilizing technology to their advantage. X'ers want to utilize the knowledge they already have, while

continually upgrading their skills as a means of self-preservation. They need challenging work that puts their knowledge to use. They desire continual training that supports individualized career goals. They benefit from mentoring programs and a teamwork approach to solving problems. X'ers do not want to be micromanaged. They need to be given creative responsibility to deal with challenging assignments and they want to be held accountable for the results. They need to be given clearly defined goals and given the latitude to reach the goals in their own way. They desire constant feedback to facilitate their professional growth. X'ers are anxious to know what they are doing right or wrong. They grow more confident and secure with regular appraisal of their performance. They are apt to question work issues, conditions, and management techniques in an effort to understand. X'ers want their voices to be heard. They want to actively participate in decisions that affect their work environment and their livelihood. When officers become frustrated with an organization and leave its employment, it creates a vacuum in which agencies are constantly short handed, attempting to find qualified recruits within a diminished applicant pool, and spending much needed funding to train new employees over and over again.

In his research, Farren (2003) also concluded that most agencies do not take the time to find out why employees are leaving, and those that do take the time to ask questions tend to discount the results instead of changing their game plans to accommodate the needs of Generation X. The times have changed, but in many instances, law enforcement has not. This profession has long demonstrated a tendency to hold on to rigid traditions and practices, many of which are unappealing to X'ers. Many X'ers are not interested in dedicating their life to the job, unless the employer is dedicated to the individual employee. Xers want jobs that are best for their families. They want to have some control over their livelihood, unlike many of their

parents who dedicated themselves and their time to the same job, only to end up on the short end of the stick in the long run.

The aforementioned written survey of Generation X police recruits is included for review by the reader in the Appendix section of this research paper. Due to the large amount of information obtained, the tabulated response percentage rates for each statement on the survey have been included on the survey instrument in the appendix, as opposed to being included in the form of a chart or graph. The survey of these Generation X recruits revealed that approximately ninety seven percent of them believe that retirement benefits are important when choosing an agency for a career. Eighty two percent believed the salary range of a specific agency is critical when deciding to apply for employment, however; only forty four percent of the students surveyed indicated that starting salaries for law enforcement were appealing to them. Surprisingly, more than eighty percent of the survey group indicated that the professional reputation of an agency was more important than the salary when deciding to apply for employment. Forty six percent of the survey group indicated that the opportunity to advance in rank is more important than salary, however, thirty percent had no opinion on whether rank was more important, and twenty four percent felt like salary was more important than advancement in rank. Likewise, approximately fifty one percent felt like job related training and educational opportunities were more important than salary when deciding to apply for employment with a specific agency, however, twenty two percent had no opinion, and twenty seven percent disagreed, indicating that salary was more important than training and education. Unlike some of the previously published research results, a vast majority (approximately seventy percent) of the students participating in this survey indicated that they would like to be employed with the same law enforcement agency for their entire career. A large majority (seventy three percent)

also indicated that the opportunity to work in a specialized area was more important than advancement in rank. Approximately half of the recruits indicated that they considered local law enforcement as a stepping-stone to other employment in law enforcement. This can be viewed as an indication that although the majority (seventy percent) of the survey group would like to work for the same for the same agency their entire career, half of them will begin their career with the predetermined notion that the job is a stepping-stone to something else. Ninety two percent of the survey group indicated that they prefer working as a member of a team towards a specific goal, as opposed to working by themselves towards the goal. This is in contrast to the notion that due to their strong sense of independence, X'ers are not good team players. Approximately ninety-seven percent of the sample group indicated that they prefer working for a supervisor who displays a teamwork approach style of leadership. Only twenty seven percent indicated that they would like to work for a militaristic, command and control type of supervisor. Slightly over half indicated that they are likely to question how and why tasks are done in a certain manner before performing those tasks. This can be seen as an indication of X'ers need for information as opposed to the notion that they simply question authority for the sake of asking. The vast majority (seventy three percent) also indicated that they like new challenges and quickly become bored with routine, repetitive work assignments. Surprisingly, only twenty-seven percent of those surveyed indicated that they felt their generation was misunderstood by older generations, and fifty eight percent indicated that they believe a paramilitary-based organization is necessary to enforce discipline in a law enforcement agency. Combined, approximately eighty nine percent of the survey group indicated that their job performance should be evaluated with constructive feedback on a daily, weekly, or monthly basis, with fifty four percent of those indicating a preference for monthly feedback. Only eleven percent of respondents indicated a

preference for biannual or annual performance evaluations. Combined, seventy three percent indicated they would most likely respond to an agency website or job fair / recruiting officer when looking for a job, as opposed to the more traditional methods of advertising via newspaper, radio, or television.

## **CONCLUSIONS**

This research was intended to take a close look at the problems law enforcement experiences in recruiting, hiring, and retaining Generation X employees. It was hypothesized that law enforcement may have to change some traditional methods in order to gain success in the employment and retention of suitable candidates. John F. Kennedy is quoted as saying, "Change is the law of life, and those who look only to the past or the present are certain to miss the future." Considering Kennedy's statement, law enforcement agencies must change in order to prepare for the future needs of the public, the agency, and the officers. The profession can no longer afford to keep hanging on to time honored traditions that are no longer effective or applicable in today's ever-changing job market. Recruitment is one of the areas requiring change. Simply posting job ads on the radio or in the newspaper is not as effective in reaching the desired audience as it may have been in the past. The research revealed that agencies should design and utilize departmental websites in recruitment efforts. Websites are generally less expensive to maintain than the cost of advertising thru various other media outlets. Generation X is accustomed to surfing the web and they want to check out an agency before spending their time and energy applying for a job. They want information and lots of it. By checking out a website, or by finding the lack thereof, Xers can instantly determine the value an agency places on the use of computers and technology. This sends a strong message about the organization to the potential Generation X employee. They can also gain valuable information about the

opportunities and benefits afforded by the particular agency such as salary scales, retirement plans, specialized assignments, rank and division structure, and training opportunities. The survey group also indicated a preference for recruiting efforts at job fairs. Administrators should keep in mind that job fairs staffed by recruiting teams give the Xer the opportunity to check out numerous potential employers at the same time while receiving vast amounts of information (pamphlets, video presentations, benefit and salary package information, etc.). Recruiting teams give the agency the opportunity to display its talent and professionalism in person. The potential applicants get to meet face to face with a walking, talking, “sales force”, who, if chosen carefully, has the potential to sell the agency to qualified candidates.

Due to the inability of many law enforcement agencies to compete with private industry’s salary base, the written survey results have particular significance. While less than half of the respondents indicated that the starting salaries are appealing, the majority indicated that they do believe the retirement benefits and salary range of a specific agency are important. Generally, governmental agencies have good retirement plans, even though salary bases might not be that competitive with private industry, or even larger law enforcement agencies. So the question begs to be answered: how can agencies attract candidates when salary options are not appealing? First, agencies should tout good retirement packages. Secondly, administrators should work diligently to educate commissioners, council members, and city managers about the true costs associated with turn over rate and recruiting, hiring, and training a new officer to replace a “veteran officer”. Administrators should be diligent in their efforts to maintain competitive salaries with surrounding agencies for their employees. Budgets should be monitored closely throughout the year to trim waste in an effort to gain support for pay raises during the budget approval process. Trimming waste could possibly provide additional funding for salary

increases. Administrators should also pay close attention to the fact that approximately eighty three percent of the survey group indicated that the professional reputation of an agency is more important than the salary. Law enforcement agencies should strive to maintain a professional reputation that the public is well aware of. A diligent effort should be made to instill professionalism within the entire organization, to the degree that the public takes note and the reputation becomes prolific and lasting. Word of mouth is one of the best recruiting tools available. Law enforcement administrators should utilize the media to their advantage, instead of shunning them because of distrust and secrecy. The media should be used to highlight investigations, arrests, community policing programs, crime prevention efforts, and other success stories. The media will be there more times than not to report the mistakes made by an agency. Smart administrators use the media to report their numerous successes while working hard to minimize mistakes, develop a positive public opinion, and maintain a professional reputation for their agency. Law enforcement agencies should advertise their hard-earned professional reputations in recruiting efforts. Recruiting campaigns should also highlight specialized areas and training available within the department.

Seventy three percent of the survey group indicated that they like new challenges and quickly become bored with routine, repetitive work assignments. Anyone who has worked in the law enforcement profession comes to a quick realization that many of the day-to-day tasks can be unappealing and repetitive. Xers need to be challenged to find new ways of implementing and completing these tasks and improving the ways in which they are accomplished. Supervisors should be open to suggestions for change if it will eliminate the “routine” and accomplish the same results. Xers want to work in a team environment for a supervisor who earns their respect through competence as opposed to rank alone. Administrators should

recognize that Xers are not usually intimidated by authority and often resent autocratic styles of leadership. Although they understand the need for quick, decisive discipline, they often do not appreciate strict procedural boundaries, which they feel inhibit productivity and creativity.

Leaders should take time to provide constructive feedback to employees on a regular, timely basis, thus establishing the discipline of the agency and preventing unacceptable behaviors that might result in possible punishment actions. Leaders who continually give feedback to their employees keep them informed of what is expected and what will not be tolerated. Xers want information. They want to know how they are doing, what is going on, and why things are done in a certain fashion. They need to know the expectations upfront, and their self-esteem will be strengthened when they meet those expectations through appropriate work efforts, as opposed to being forced to meet those expectations through punishment. The exercise of punishment, when necessary, should be certain, swift, fair, and proportional to the offense.

Administrators should reevaluate leadership styles, embracing those leaders who value and seek employee input, soliciting the team's participation in the decision making process. Farren (2003) concluded that the Xer wants to have an active role in the work place, where his voice and ideas are heard. This is the cornerstone of community policing: the officer has the ability to make a decision and deal with the problem as he sees best without running into red tape, second guessing, or the inaction of a supervisor that jeopardizes the solution to the problem. Xers want leaders who are caring and willing to devote time and energy to resolve difficult issues that could just as easily be avoided by the supervisor. Xers want leaders who know how to delegate tasks, giving the employees the overall goals and then the flexibility to tackle the challenge on their own. A key to this process is to present the employee with a clearly defined challenge and then hold him/her responsible for the results. Responsibility helps develop the

employee's sense of purpose and value. Leaders should recognize and reward their subordinates' accomplishments. Knowing that they have purpose and that their work ethic and their accomplishments are going to be recognized is gratifying to the Generation X employee. In a sense, this gives the employee an ownership in the solution process and therefore, an ownership in the organization. Xers gain a sense of security and belonging when they are using the education and skills they already possess while continually upgrading their training and abilities. Administrators should support this generation's desire to acquire new skills and expertise. Administrators should utilize pre-employment questionnaires to determine what interests, education, and skills the candidate already possesses. This demonstrates that the employee's background, skills, and education are of importance to the administration. This information should be utilized to individualize training needs or job assignments that will benefit the agency as well as the employee. These employees are motivated to learn and grow professionally. To the extent possible, they should be exposed to different areas within the profession and allowed to work closely with leadership when practical. This demonstrates the agency's commitment to the individual and portrays the agency's confidence in the value of the individual's work as a member of the team. Unfortunately, on occasion, employees will transfer to another law enforcement agency, or leave the profession altogether, for employment in the private sector. When this occurs, agencies should utilize an exit survey to determine why the employee has chosen to leave the agency. Results should be closely examined to reveal possible problem areas that might affect retention.

Finally, law enforcement should take note of the importance Xers place on their personal and family life. They do not live to work; instead, they work to live. They value their personal time. Stable shift patterns that allow the employee more time for self or family should be

considered and implemented if possible. Although administrators want employees who are dedicated to the job, they have to understand that the work ethic of this generation is different from older generations. Xers are as devoted to their personal lives and family as Veterans and Baby Boomers were loyal to the employer. If concessions are not considered in this area, several Generation X employees are likely to leave the organization. Although many administrators want employees to put the job first, this generation is unbending in this area. Administrators need to grasp this concept, because ex-employees are certainly not dedicated or loyal to the job.

The literary research and survey results indicate that agencies can successfully recruit, employ, and retain members of this generation if some traditions are examined closely and changed to accommodate the Xers work ethic. Change is difficult, but a necessary process. One concept is certain, regardless of the type of project at hand; not all change leads to improvement, but no improvement can occur without some form of change. Time and history dictates that each generation will experience change from previous generations. It is time for law enforcement to change in some areas as well. Not only will this lead to a more satisfied, stable employee, but the public will benefit from a more professional, well balanced, valued law enforcement officer and agency.

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## APPENDIX

Please answer the following by placing an “X” in the column that best describes your opinion. This information is being gathered for statistical purposes only. All information gathered is anonymous and will only be used as part of the Administrative Research Paper required by the Bill Blackwood Law Enforcement Management Institute of Texas (LEMIT).

Please indicate the year in which you were born \_\_\_\_\_

Please indicate the Law Enforcement Academy you are attending \_\_\_\_\_

	<b>Strongly Disagree</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>No Opinion</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Strongly Agree</b>
Starting salaries for local law enforcement are appealing to me	7.9%	34.9%	12.7%	44.4%	0%
Retirement benefits are important when choosing a specific agency for a career	0%	1.6%	1.6%	49.2%	47.6%
The salary range of a specific agency is critical when deciding to apply for employment	3.2%	3.2%	11.1%	61.9%	20.6%
The professional reputation of a specific agency is more important than the salary when deciding to apply for employment	0%	4.8%	12.7%	68.3%	14.3%
The opportunity to advance in rank within an agency is more important than the salary.	3.2%	20.6%	30.2%	41.3%	4.8%
Job-related training and department-sponsored educational opportunities are more important than salary when deciding to apply for employment with a specific agency	1.6%	25.4%	22.2%	46.0%	4.8%

	<b>Strongly Disagree</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>No Opinion</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Strongly Agree</b>
I would like to be employed with the same law enforcement agency for my entire career	0%	11.1%	19.0%	42.9%	27.0%
I consider the opportunity to work in a specialized area (ie: narcotics, warrants, investigations) more important than advancement in rank	0%	14.3%	12.7%	55.5%	17.5%
I consider local law enforcement a stepping stone to other employment in law enforcement	1.6%	23.8%	25.4%	34.9%	14.3%
Generally, I prefer working as a member of a team towards a specific goal	0%	1.6%	6.3%	63.5%	28.6%
Generally, I prefer working by myself towards a specific goal	0%	41.3%	36.5%	17.5%	4.8%
I prefer working for a supervisor who displays a command and control (militaristic) style of leadership	6.3%	31.7%	34.9%	25.4%	1.6%
I prefer working for a supervisor who displays a teamwork approach style of leadership	0%	1.6%	1.6%	69.8%	27.0%
I am likely to question how and why tasks are done in a certain manner before performing those tasks myself	3.2%	28.6%	14.3%	50.8%	3.2%

	<b>Strongly Disagree</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>No Opinion</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Strongly Agree</b>
I like new challenges and quickly become bored with routine, repetitive work assignments	0%	15.9%	11.1%	60.3%	12.7%
I feel my generation is misunderstood by older generations	1.6%	39.7%	31.7%	25.4%	1.6%
I believe that a paramilitary-type organization is necessary to enforce discipline in a law enforcement agency	1.6%	14.3%	25.4%	52.4%	6.3%
	<b>Daily</b>	<b>Weekly</b>	<b>Monthly</b>	<b>Biannually</b>	<b>Annually</b>
When evaluating your job performance, how often should your supervisor give you constructive feedback?	14.3%	20.6%	54.0%	9.5%	1.6%
	<b>Newspaper Ad</b>	<b>Television Ad</b>	<b>Radio Ad</b>	<b>Agency Website</b>	<b>Job Fair / Recruiting Officer</b>
When looking for a job, I would be the most likely to respond to: (check the one option that you would use more than the others)	15.9%	9.5%	1.6%	47.6%	25.4%