

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

**Update Training: A Developmental Step
Toward Becoming a Supervisor in Law Enforcement**

**An Administrative Research Paper
Submitted in Partial Fulfillment
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Leadership Command College**

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ABSTRACT

The first line supervisor's job is among the most important in all of law enforcement. In order to be successful, a newly promoted first line supervisor should possess the proper knowledge. Many young officers often transfer to other "specialized assignments" early in their careers well before they have a chance to become proficient in their initial assignment as a patrol officer. Update training for officers is relevant to contemporary law enforcement because it is important that law enforcement agencies give their employees the knowledge they will need in order to be effective supervisors.

The purpose of this research is to explore whether or not newly promoted supervisors, especially those who have minimal street experience, are receiving the knowledge-based training necessary for them to be successful. The methods of inquiry used include: an examination of literary data in the area of the supervision of police personnel, as well as first line supervisor responsibilities in general. Additionally, surveyed data concerning agency promotional requirements, specialized assignments, and supervisory training, was taken from various sized departments and compared to the literary findings. The researcher discovered that police departments, as a matter of practice, do not normally offer supplemental technical training to officers who are not assigned to the patrol function. Subsequently, officers with a "minimum" amount of patrol street experience would benefit from updated technical training prior to becoming promoted to the position of first line supervisor.

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INTRODUCTION

It has long been accepted that the First Line Supervisor's role is among the most important in all of law enforcement. According to Mendofix (1994), "When supervisors perform effectively, departmental and personal goals are achieved, the community is better served, and officers find themselves functioning in a positive working environment" (p. 2). "The debate is still out over the amount of influence that a supervisor can have over subordinate behavior" (Engel, 2000, p.6). It was suggested by Muir (1977), that a supervisor's influence on subordinate's attitudes and outlooks could affect their discretionary behavior. With such awesome responsibility, it would seem that the first line supervisor would be among the most highly trained individuals in their departments. "Generally speaking, at the time of promotion, the new supervisor is usually endowed with all kinds of knowledge-based skills because of extended duty as a patrol officer" (Imundo, 1991; Albright, 1997, p.12). This is a benefit, since most agencies require that that new first line supervisor be assigned to a patrol function. But what if this is not the case? The very real possibility can exist that a new first line supervisor has but a minimal amount of patrol experience.

The selection of the "best" officer for the position is a common agency practice that can prove disastrous if that officer has not been adequately trained. The best officers often times transfer to other "specialized" assignments early in their careers because they have exhibited leadership traits and an ability to get the job done. In many agencies, young patrol officers with only a minimum amount of "street" experience are allowed to compete for "specialized " assignments that are often far removed from the patrol function.

As previously stated, some of the best officers often migrate to other specialized assignments early in their careers. The transition phase from a patrol line position to first line supervisor can be difficult enough, even for those officers with an abundance of street-level experience. "Because of the nature of the job, supervisors must work to attain objectives through the efforts of others by becoming operationally effective in several skill areas including, knowledge, human, conceptual and affective" (Effective Police Supervision, 1999, p.7). This author will explore the question of whether or not police departments should consider supplemental technical training to officers that are not assigned to the patrol function but who hope to be considered for promotion in the future.

The methods of research will consist of an examination of literary data in the area of supervision of police personnel as well as first line supervisor responsibilities in general. Surveyed data concerning agency promotional requirements, specialized assignments, and supervisory training, taken from various sized departments will be compared to the literary findings. The researcher anticipates that the intended outcome will support the need for agencies to consider incorporating periodic refresher training for potential first line supervisor applicants.

This research may indicate a need for law enforcement to examine their policies and procedures regarding training in regards to those officers who eventually hope to promote to first line supervisor as well as those who are newly promoted. Police departments cannot and should not rely on their officers to determine what training is needed for advancement. Periodic career assessments with personnel should be done on an annual basis. Career review and assessments can be done as part of the

employee's performance evaluations. The important point is that an employee who plans on eventually trying to advance to the first line supervisor level be given the opportunity to gain the necessary training and patrol experience that is required of that job.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

As previously stated, the importance of the role of the first line supervisor in law enforcement cannot be understated. According to Iannone, first-level supervisors are of special importance because of the great need for teamwork. "Upon them rests most of the responsibility for providing the cohesive force that welds the working force into a well functioning, smoothly operating unit" (p.1). Police managers rely on first line supervisors to manage people in order to accomplish the goals and objectives of the organization. A supervisor is a manager at the first level of management, which means that the employees reporting to the supervisor are not managers. Managing at the supervisory level means ensuring that the employees in particular department are performing their jobs such that the department will make its contribution to the organizations goals.

The functions, responsibilities, and activities of supervisors have been defined in several ways. Iannone states that law enforcement supervisors can expect to deal with the following activities on a daily basis: planner, personnel officer, trainer, controller, decision-maker/communicator, and leader. Planning might include activities such as beat assignments, special events and scheduling. Personnel officer functions could include assignment of employees to special assignments based on their strengths. An

example of the trainer function would include teaching subordinates who are deficient in certain areas and in need of extra training.

The controller function involves controlling to the extent possible subordinate conduct. The decision-maker and communicator function deals with the supervisor's ability to make sound decisions and effectively communicate those decisions clearly. The leader function is demonstrated by the way the supervisor conducts his professional and personal life, and by the work ethic that he demonstrates.

Samuel C. Certo defines a general set of functions for the supervisor position somewhat differently than Iannone Certo's list of supervisor functions includes planning, organizing, staffing, leading and controlling. Planning as defined by Certo might include the development of goals and objectives directly related to the supervisor's assignment. Organizing would include the supervisor's ability to organize his or her work group in order to accomplish goals and objectives. Staffing as defined by Certo deals with the identifying, hiring and developing the necessary number and quality of employees, a function not usually associated with law enforcement first line supervisors. The leading function according to Certo deals with the supervisor's responsibility of letting subordinate's know what is expected of them and for inspiring and motivating them to do good work. Controlling according to Certo involves the supervisor's ability to identify problems and then to implement a way to fix the problem. Monitoring performance and making corrections is also a function of controlling.

Certo defines four skill categories that are necessary for any level of management: technical, human relations, conceptual, and decision-making. According to Certo, the relative importance of each type of skill depends on the level of

management. First line supervisors rely more on technical skills than do higher-level managers because employees who have a problem doing their jobs go to the supervisor and expect help. In law enforcement technical skills might include report writing, field based reporting, Mobile Data Terminal (MDT) use, and knowledge of policies and procedures. Conceptual skills at the supervisor level might include working with citizens and subordinates on problem solving in reference to Community Oriented Policing Projects (COPP). Supervisors might also find themselves working on various department related projects in which conceptual skills would prove useful.

Human relation skills would include such things as employee motivation, conducting employee evaluations, and handling citizen complaints. Decision making skills might include items such as helping subordinates to determine requisites for arrest, or how to handle disciplinary actions. Finally, decision-making skills are required so that the supervisor can analyze information and reach good decisions.

METHODOLOGY

The research question to be examined considers whether or not police departments should consider supplemental technical training to officers that are not assigned to the patrol function but who hope to be considered for future promotion as a first line supervisor. The researcher hypothesizes that police departments as a matter of practice do not normally offer supplemental supervisor training program to officers not assigned to the patrol function. The researcher further hypothesizes that officers with a “minimum” amount of patrol street experience would benefit from such “refresher” type technical training prior to promotion to first line supervisor. The method of inquiry will include a 16-question survey to be distributed to participants from across the state of

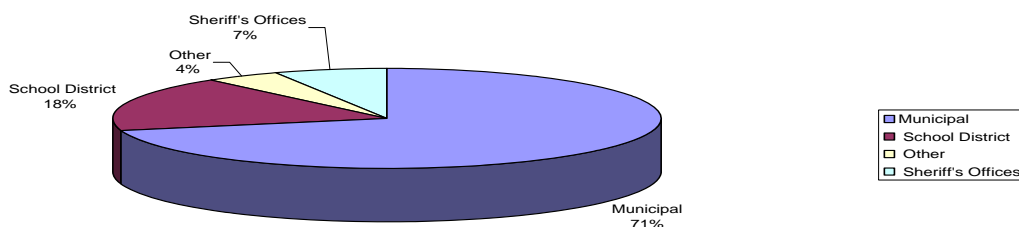
Texas. All of the participants are first line supervisors, command staff personnel and Chiefs of Police attending the Law Enforcement Management Institute of Texas (LEMIT) Modules I and II. The instrument will be used to measure the researcher's findings regarding supplemental training for future first line supervisor applicants.

The survey questions pertain to eligibility and educational requirements for first line supervisors. Additional questions as to agency type, number of sworn employees, rank and years of service of the participant will also be asked. The response rate to the survey instrument resulted in 100% (N=45). The information obtained from the survey will be analyzed by data comparison in conjunction with graph comparisons.

FINDINGS

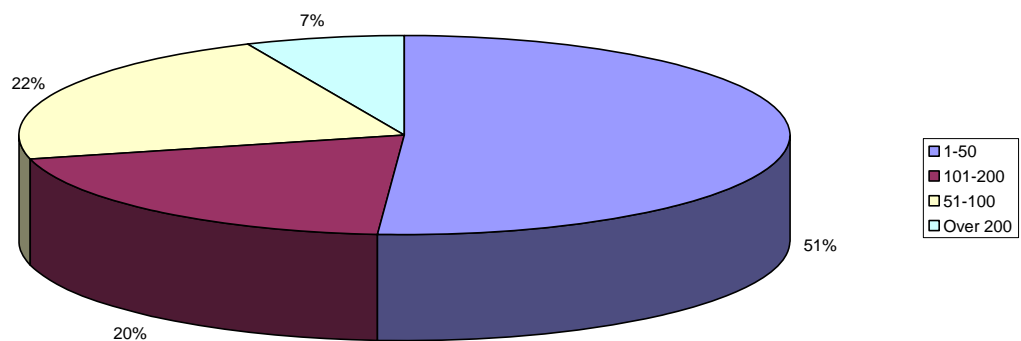
Question 1 of the survey corresponds to the type of agency of the participants. The survey indicates that 71% (N=32) of the survey participants worked for a municipal police department, while 17% (N=8) were employed by a school district police agency. The remaining 12% (N=5) worked for either a county sheriff's office or other type of police agency (See figure 1).

Figure 1



Question 2 corresponds to the size (number of officers) of the agency. The survey indicates that 51% (N=23) of the participants worked at agencies with between 1 and 50 sworn officers, while 22% (N=10) worked at agencies with between 100 and 200 sworn officers and 20% (N=9) worked at agencies with between 51 and 100 officers. The remaining 8% (N=3) of participants worked for agencies with over 200 sworn officers (see figure 2).

Figure 2



Question 3 corresponds to the “yes” or “no” answer as to whether the agency is civil service and question 4 corresponds to the “yes” or “no” answer as to whether the agency is accredited through the Commission on Accreditation for Law Enforcement Agencies(CALEA). The survey indicates that 33.3% (N=15) of the agencies were civil service while the remaining 66.7% (N=30) were not. The survey indicates that 86.7% (N=39) of the agencies were not accredited and the remaining 13.3% (N=6) were.

The survey indicates that 82% (N=37) of the agencies required no minimum college hours or degree requirements. Of the remaining 18% (N=8) of agencies, only 4% (N=2) required an Associate's Degree with the other 13.6% (N=5) requiring some college hours.

Question 7 corresponds to the minimum "time-in-grade" (years) before an officer can test for promotion to first line supervisor. The survey indicates that 53% (N=24) of agencies required 2 years of service prior to being eligible to test for promotion and 18% (N=8) required 3 years of service (See figure 3).

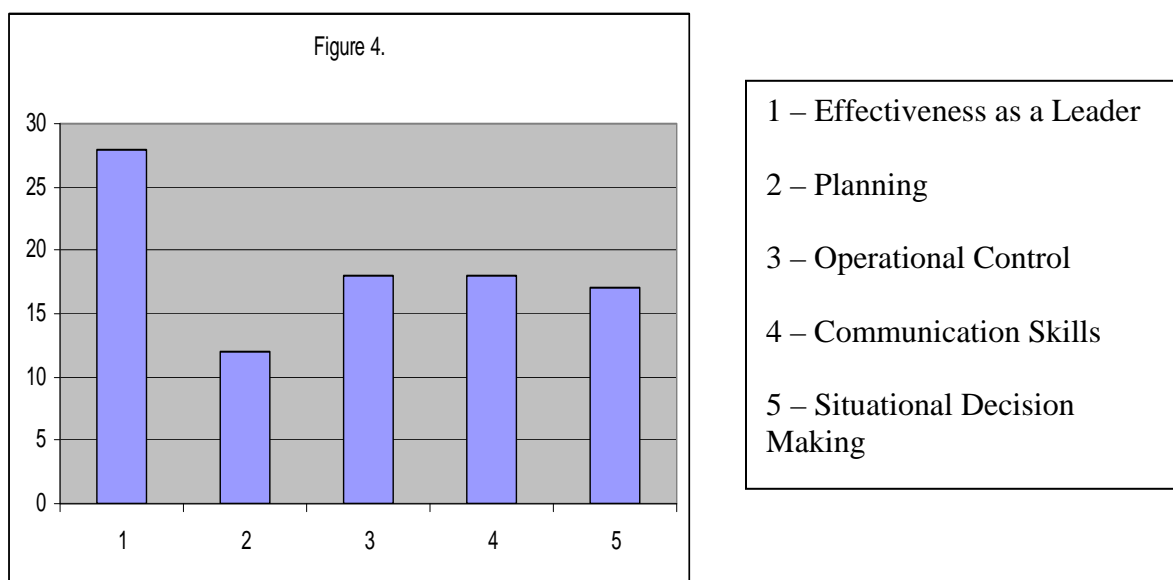
Question 8 corresponds to the "yes" or "no" question of whether or not the agency utilized an Assessment Center as a part of the promotional process for first line supervisor. The survey indicated that 69% (N=31) of the agencies did not use an Assessment Center and the other 31% (N=14) of agencies did.

Question 9 corresponds to the question as to whether the agency has a structured training program for a new first line supervisor. The survey indicated that 75% (N=34) of the agencies had no structured training program while the remaining 25% (N=11) did. Question 10 corresponds to the length of the training program for those participants who answered yes. The survey indicates that 36% (N=3) of the agencies had a 2-week training program and 36% (N=3) of the agencies had a 4-week supervisor-training program.

Question 11 corresponds to the "yes" or "no" question of whether a newly promoted first line supervisor is always assigned to a patrol function. The survey indicated that 80% (N=36) of agencies require assignment to the patrol function for

newly promoted first line supervisors and the remaining 20% (N=9) of agencies had no such requirement.

Question 12 lists 5 common supervisor skills and competencies. The participant was asked to rank order the skills from 1 to 5, with 1 being the most often lacked skill of newly promoted first line supervisors. The skills included Effectiveness as a Leader, Operational Control, Planning/Organization, Communication Skills, and Situational Decision Making. The survey indicated that 62% (N=28) of participants believed that Effectiveness as a Leader was the most often lacked skill of new supervisors. The survey also indicated that 36% (N=17) of participants believed that Situational Decision Making posed the least problems for a new supervisor (See figure 4).



Question 13 corresponds to the “yes” or “no” question of whether the agency requires supplemental refresher training (on current patrol policies and procedures for example) for officers not assigned to the patrol function. The survey indicated that 93% (N=42) of the agencies had no such requirement while the remaining 7% (N=3) did.

Question 14 corresponds to the “yes” or “no” question for participants who answered

“no” to question 13. The survey indicated that 100% (N=45) of the participants believed that the refresher training would benefit their departments.

Question 15 corresponds to the question of whether the agency requires reassignment back to patrol for officers who wish to be eligible for promotion to first line supervisor. The survey indicated that 100% (N=45) of agencies had no such requirement.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

As previously stated, the importance of the role of the first line supervisor in law enforcement cannot be understated. The research question examined was whether or not police departments should consider supplemental technical training to officers that are not assigned to the patrol function but who hope to be considered for future promotion as a first line supervisor. The research suggests that police departments as a matter of practice do not normally offer supplemental technical training to officers not assigned to the patrol function. The research further suggests that officers with a “minimum” amount of patrol street experience would benefit from such “refresher” type technical training prior to promotion to first line supervisor.

Although supervisors need not be highly skilled in all the technical aspects of the jobs they supervise, they should have a good working knowledge of the principal aspect of such jobs (N.F. Iannone, & M.D. Iannone, 2001). The transition to first line supervisor can be much more difficult if the new supervisor does not already have a thorough understanding of the subordinate’s job that he is being asked to manage. Research shows that 67% of agencies required two years of patrol experience or less before an officer was eligible for promotion to first line supervisor. The research also shows that

75% of agencies had no formal training program for newly promoted first line supervisors. Agencies may be setting themselves for disaster by promoting officers with very little patrol experience to first line supervisor. Research shows that 80% of agencies require assignment to the patrol function for newly promoted supervisors. The situation also exists where an officer may have been accepted to work a specialized assignment early in their career such as Crime Prevention or School Resource Officer (SRO). These officers with a minimum of street experience (two years or less) may work in their specialized assignment for several years. During this time away from patrol many changes can occur. Changes such as advances in police equipment (Mobile Data Terminals), changes in statutory law, and changes in patrol policies and procedures, occur without that officer knowing much about them. The time learn this information is not when an officer is promoted to a supervisory position. Therefore agencies should begin to consider some type of periodic refresher training for officers not assigned to patrol function. It is important that all officers, especially those who someday hope to promote to a supervisory position be kept current on this information. The research shows that 93% (N=42) of the agencies had no such refresher-training requirement, but that 100% (N=45) of the command staff personnel believed that such a requirement would benefit their departments.

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