

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

**The Reno Model PTO Program:
Effective Training Principles for the 21st Century**

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ABSTRACT

Transitioning from the San Jose training model to the Reno model is relevant to contemporary law enforcement because currently generation Xers make up the largest percentage of officers within law enforcement agencies, and by the year 2020, data predicts that the millennial generation will be the largest generational group in history (Henchey, 2005). These two generations do not respond as favorably to the learning structure of the San Jose model as the previous two generations (Kennedy, 2005). The new generations respond better to training that incorporates adult learning techniques and critical thinking skills (Cleveland, 2006). The Reno model provides this type of training. The position of the researcher is that for the benefit of new recruits and the continued progression of law enforcement as a profession, agencies should transition from the San Jose model (FTO) program to the Reno model (PTO) program.

The types of information used to support the researcher's position were a review of articles, internet sites, periodicals, journals, and philosophies contained in the PTO manual. The conclusion drawn from this position paper is that millennials are not the future of law enforcement but the present. In order to entice the cream of the crop into law enforcement, agencies must provide a training program that makes this profession both rewarding and fulfilling. The Reno model is a training program that meets this criteria.

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INTRODUCTION

Like any professional organization, law enforcement is constantly evolving. Agencies are proactive in this evolution by keeping current with changing technology, diversified personnel, and equipment. Law enforcement has improved negative public perception by changing the image from that of a blue collared job permeated with “good ole boys” to a vocation comprised of educated, versatile, and diversified men and women. Agencies should embrace this same progressive philosophy as it relates to the field training of new officers.

As evidenced by the promotional material displayed on police department websites, a large number of agencies depict the street officer as the backbone of the department. They strive to have each officer embody the mission statement of the organization. Many citizens form their opinion of law enforcement in general and their local agency based on their interaction with the patrolman (Martin, n.d.). With the perception of the public and quality of the patrolman so vital, many agencies are still using a variation of the training method developed over 35 years ago.

In 1971, officers were issued revolvers and nightsticks. Today, they carry semi-automatic firearms, expandable batons, tasers, pepper spray, and less lethal munitions. In the 70s, reports were written with pen and paper; presently, they are completed using laptop computers. In the early 70s, the veteran officers were training traditionalists and baby boomers as new recruits, who respected authority, valued job security, and were workaholics. Today, the Field Training Officer (FTO) is training generation Xers and millenials who work to live, like to have fun, and are not concerned with job security (Martin, n.d.).

Despite the progression in numerous facets of law enforcement, many departments still train their officers with the San Jose Field Training Program, which was developed in the early 70s. Like the revolver, nightstick, and pen and paper, this training program has done an excellent job preparing earlier recruits for life on the streets. But like the evolution of other areas, today's field training needs to address the requirements of the present generation. As articulated by Dwyer & Laufersweiler-Dwyer (2004), although training has kept up with new knowledge and technology, teaching methods continue to lag behind. The Reno Police Department developed a training program, the Police Training Officer (PTO) model, which incorporates adult learning methods, critical thinking skills, and problem solving techniques. For the benefit of new recruits and the continued progression of law enforcement as a profession, agencies should transition from the FTO program to the PTO program.

POSITION

The San Jose model was an effective training method for the traditionalists and baby boomer generations; however, a contemporary training method is required to meet the needs of the generation Xers and millennials who are currently entering the work force. Lieutenant Robert L. Allen, developer of the philosophies incorporated within the San Jose model, was in the military for several years and a staff member at the California Military Academy. Because of this training, Allen had experiential knowledge regarding the principles of evaluation and rating, and he incorporated these concepts when creating his training model (Moore & Womack, 1975).

At the inception of the San Jose model, the workplace was comprised of traditionalists and baby boomers. Traditionalists were born between 1900 and 1945 and

were employees that valued a strong work ethic, respected authority, honored the chain of command, and valued the legacy they built within an organization. Baby boomers were born between 1946 and 1964 and are employees that invented the 60-hour workweek, feel hard work and loyalty to their agency justifies promotions, and career achievements help define them as individuals (Kennedy, 2005). These personalities thrive within the paramilitary structure of the San Jose model, which uses checklists, written objective tests, and behavior modification as barometers of success. Because of their experience within an organization and having had additional opportunities to promote, the baby boomers are more likely to be in positions of leadership within today's law enforcement agencies.

According to Kennedy (2005), generation Xers were born between 1965 and 1980 and represent employees who have a sense of skepticism because of the perceived injustice after seeing their parents laid off after years of dedicated service to their organizations. Unlike their parents, they do not expect employer loyalty; nor do they see any problem with not having loyalty to an organization. The millennials were born between 1981 and 1999 and are characterized as individuals who have had access to modern technology their entire life, enjoy questioning things, have high self-esteem, and enjoy teamwork and functioning in groups (Kennedy, 2005). The differing opinions between the generations, specifically those who lead and those being led, dictates that new innovative methods and varied teaching concepts be incorporated into current training methods.

As one participates in various leadership schools, such as Law Enforcement Management Institute of Texas (LEMIT) and The Institute for Law Enforcement

Administration (ILEA), the question of how to relate to and train today's new officer is often raised by the participants. Training techniques are slow to change because trainers like to use methods they are comfortable with, but they will change when forced to do so (Cleveland, 2006). Millennials do not respond to the dictatorial paramilitary style of teaching espoused in the San Jose Model. This style of training is beneficial when teaching psychomotor skills such as weapons training, handcuffing, and defensive tactics, but it is common knowledge that only a small fraction of an officer's work revolves around this type of activity.

As expressed by Cleveland (2006), today's recruit responds to adult learning methods that include Problem Based Learning (PBL) techniques. PBLs give the trainee an ill-structured problem that has many possible answers, depending on the different variables thrown into the training scenario. These types of scenarios require the trainee to use critical thinking skills, which gives them the tools to solve an array of situations. Trainees are encouraged to use whatever resources are at their disposal to solve their problems, and resources are limited only to the trainee's creativity. Resources may include the members of other divisions within the department or city, community organizations, governmental agencies, or fellow police officers. This training allows the new officer to incorporate knowledge he brings in from his life experiences and not just rely on his FTO as being the ultimate authority as is taught in the San Jose Model. The PTO program specifically uses PBL scenarios in an attempt to allow each new officer the ability to fail forward (Hoover, 2006).

In 1997, the Reno Nevada Chief of Police, Jerry Hoover, was asked to participate in a meeting that consisted of the San Francisco police chief and psychologist, the

mayor of San Francisco, several members of the American Psychological Association, and assistant director of the Community Oriented Policing Services (COPS), Dr. Ellen M. Scrivner (Hoover, 2006). Dr. Scrivner had been interested in creating a new police training program and was eager to work with Hoover. In 1999, with a \$500,000 grant from COPS, implementation of the Reno model began. The design team consisted of Hoover, members of the Reno police department, employees of the COPS office, the Police Executive Research Forum (PERF), and a few educators. After several revisions, the PTO program was ready for testing in 2001. The design team wanted the initial test agencies to represent different regions of the United States. The agencies chosen were Reno, Nevada; Lowell, Massachusetts; Savannah, Georgia; Colorado Springs, Colorado; Richmond, California; and Charlotte-Mecklenburg, North Carolina (Hoover, 2006). The final model was modified from being strictly a PBL model to a model that emphasized adult learning principles, specifically Bloom's Taxonomy of learning, and it has an evaluation component.

Bloom's taxonomy is one of the most often cited references in education, and it can be explained as six levels of learning, where each level serves as a foundation for the next level (Forehand, 2005). The Reno model uses three levels of Bloom's taxonomy, including knowledge, comprehension, and application, and adopts the philosophy that the learner needs to master one level before moving to the next, more complex level (Hoover, 2006). The Reno model focuses its training on four phases of training, which concentrates on the four areas where a patrolman spends most of his time, including non-emergency incident response, emergency incident response, patrol activities, and criminal investigations. Each of these four substantive topics is

comprised of 15 core competencies, which represent the skills, knowledge, and abilities the new officer needs in order to perform their duties (Hoover, 2006). The number of core competencies can be adapted to fit the specific needs of the organization implementing the Reno model. The four substantive topics and core competencies create a learning matrix designed to guide the recruit to the level of “application” in Bloom’s Taxonomy. The trainee demonstrates knowledge, comprehension, and application of the core competencies for each substantive topic.

The Reno model is a 15-week program, divided into four phases. The first week is an orientation week followed by phases A and B, and each phase lasts three weeks. After phase B is complete, the trainee goes through a one week mid-term evaluation, which is conducted by a police training evaluator (PTE) who is not one of the trainees PTO’s. This mid-term evaluation is followed by Phase C and D, which are also three weeks in length. The last week of training is the final evaluation and is conducted by either the same PTE whom conducted the mid-term evaluation or a separate PTE. At the end of training, the trainee goes before a Board of Evaluators (BOE) that determines if the trainee needs to be retained, retrained, or terminated.

Care is given to assure the trainee gets assigned to the proper PTO. One way of doing this is by giving each PTO and trainee an adult learning style test. The trainee can be matched with a PTO who exhibits the same type of learning style. Although the PTO does not evaluate or train during the first week, both the trainee and PTO are required to maintain a daily journal beginning the first day. The purpose of the journal is for the trainee to write about their training experience and not just write about details of

the calls. This reflective writing allows the trainee to involve metacognition, which engages a different part of their brain than when they are training (Hoover, 2006).

One of the objectives of the Reno model is to expose new officers to a problem-solving environment through actual events and realistic scenarios (Hoover, 2006). The goal is to teach the recruit to function independently while multi-tasking. A couple of ways to accomplish this is through assigning two PBLs and one Neighborhood Portfolio Exercise (NPE). The NPE is assigned to the trainee at the beginning of their training and is to be completed during their entire training program. The NPE pertains to a specific district or neighborhood of the city, and the goal is to teach them networking. The trainee analyzes the area for things like geography, demographics, crime patterns, community groups, and previous problem-solving efforts. The trainee is required to incorporate non-police sources to develop an assessment of the area and then present their findings to the BOE at the end of their training. The trainee is required to complete two PBLs during his training. The first is completed by the end of phase B and the second is completed by the end of phase D. These two ill-structured problems are scenarios previously determined by the training program and teach the trainee problem solving techniques. The PTO is instructed to allow the trainee time throughout the training to work on both the NPE and PBLs.

According to Hoover (2006), the bi-weekly performance assessment meetings are the glue that holds the training program together. The concern is that, over time, issues and time constraints tempt departments to abandon this integral part of the training. These meetings are attended by all PTO's of the trainee and ensure standardized training of the recruit and minimize rumors concerning the trainee's

performance. During these meetings, the PTOs discuss the trainee's strengths, weaknesses, and the need for prescriptive training. The prescriptive training is specific training that addresses problem areas of the trainee and can occur during any portion of their training. Any time spent in prescriptive training is in addition to the 15-week training program.

COUNTER POSITION

Many agencies believe that the San Jose Training model, developed over 35 years ago, still effectively trains today's new officer. Research conducted in 2005 suggested that between 75 and 84% of law enforcement agencies that incorporated a field training program still use the original San Jose model, or a hybrid of the original model (Hughins, 2006). The same research showed that 81% of the reporting agencies stated that their training program continues to meet the needs of the newly hired officers. As reported by Moore and Womack (1975), prior to 1960, the San Jose Police Department was like a majority of other agencies that did not offer any formal training for new police officers. New recruits were arbitrarily assigned to a senior officer who happened to be working the same shift that particular day, and this process was repeated on a daily basis for two weeks. In some instances, the new officer did not receive any "on the job" training. After the limited training, the officer was left to "sink or swim." Very few officers were terminated due to the lack of a validated employee evaluation system.

Moore and Womack (1975) further explained that a small improvement was implemented in the early 1960s, when the San Jose Police Department began participating in a basic police academy. Upon completion of the academy, the recruit

worked solo in an assigned beat, without the benefit of a structured training program. Little had changed in the training program when, in 1969, the department hired an enthusiastic young officer who consistently exhibited inadequate driving skills. In the spring of 1970, this officer was involved in a two-car accident that left him severely injured and a passenger of the other car dead. This horrific incident was the catalyst that brought about the inception of the Recruit Training and Management Proposal created by Lt. Robert L. Allen of the San Jose Police Department. In 1973, after several revisions, the Recruit Training and Management Proposal became what is now known as the San Jose Field Training Program. The revisions were made by various members of the department including Allen, Roberts, Mallett, and Kaminsky (Moore & Womack, 1975).

The San Jose model quickly became the mainstay of numerous law enforcement agencies. The new program provided agencies the much needed structure and documentation of new officers' performance during training and provided those same officers the supervised and educational transition from the academy to field training (Pitts, Glensor, & Peak, 2007). The San Jose model has remained relatively unchanged ever since. As pointed out by Huggins (2006), the San Jose model was a well-developed training method that has withstood the test of time. In 2002, the South San Francisco Police Department (SSFPD) realized that their FTO program had nearly a 50% failure rate (Massoni, 2009). An evaluation of the program by leaders of the department revealed that generational differences between the trainers and recruits were a major cause of the failure rate. SSFPD instituted an adult based learning style

of training program, and the success rate has considerably increased, although it is not known to what percentage the success increased.

Many baby boomers in leadership declare that that the principles applied in the Reno Model are touchy-feely programs that ignore real police work (Peace Officer Training [POST], 2004). This type of thinking lends itself to the idea that “what was good enough for me is good enough for them,” or “I had to pay my dues, so they (the new recruit) needs to shut up and stop whinning.” The fact remains that millenials are entering the work place. Departments can choose to hide their heads in the sand by ignoring this fact and staying with the status quo, or they can accept the challenge of creating an organization that appeals to the new generation. What opponents may fail to realize is that the Reno model does teach “real police work.” If “real police work” involves making arrests and issuing speeding tickets or helping victims and dealing with neighborhood problems, the Reno model addresses all of this while teaching the trainee to effectively use their strengths and weaknesses.

Some might argue that since the San Jose model has withstood the test of time and legal challenges, the Reno model could be incorporated into the already effective San Jose model. In 1994, Glenn Kaminsky, one of the early designers of and main seminar teacher of the San Jose Model, asked Jerry Hoover to give a presentation on community policing at a national field training conference (Hoover, 2006). Hoover was asked to incorporate community policing using the San Jose model. Hoover created four Standardized Evaluation Guidelines (SEGs) that began being used by FTO's around the country. FTO's, who either did not embrace community policing or understand it, simply checked ‘not observed’ in their daily observation reports (Hoover,

2006). Hoover worked with Kaminsky in trying to incorporate community oriented policing into the San Jose model but learned that the paramilitary philosophy on which the San Jose model was fashioned could not be meshed with community oriented policing.

CONCLUSION

Law enforcement has made much advancement in the last 35 years in an attempt to keep current with the changing world in which they operate. In keeping with this progress, agencies need to incorporate new training that will appeal to today's generation. The baby boomer generation has retired or is quickly approaching retirement age, and generation X is currently the largest group in policing (Henchey, 2005). According to Henchey (2005), statistics predict that millennials' will be the largest generational group in history, topping 102 million workers, and by 2020, they will make up the majority of law enforcement agencies. Research in this paper confirmed that these two generations do not respond as favorably to the style of training that is used in the San Jose model as the previous two generations did. Henchy (2005), further explained that today's leaders will influence the millennials' career choice, and law enforcement leader's must convince them that policing is the best choice to obtain a fulfilling career.

Millennials crave a learning environment where they can participate in collaborative learning that challenges them, such as problem based scenarios (McMahon & Pospisil, 2005). The Reno model incorporates this style of learning and encourages today's recruit to take an active role in their training. The Reno model uses principles that enable the millennial to be creative and uses various groups to facilitate

in their training. This learning environment encourages the trainee to become a part of the organization from the onset. The millennial generation is not the generation of the future; it is the generation of the present. Law enforcement agencies must immediately adapt to this realization if they do not want to face a crisis within their organizations. A tangible way to accomplish this goal is by utilizing the Reno model of training.

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