

**The Bill Blackwood  
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**Implementing an Individual Development Plan (IDP) into Law  
Enforcement Agency**



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## **ABSTRACT**

Negotiating obstacles is not something new to the law enforcement profession. However, the recent budget crisis has affected law enforcement executives' ability to invest into new technology and new programs there by having a direct impact on the organization's budget. The current economic climate is such that many agencies have experienced unusual budgetary constraints. These forced budget cuts have caused departments to reduce manpower and in some cases it has caused some departments to be eliminated altogether. Agencies have reduced and disbanded some programs within their agency that has been effective in having a positive impact within their communities.

Law enforcement has a new generation entering its ranks that will soon dominate the profession in the amount of employees in the work place. The Millennial generation is the most technical generation to enter the workforce. They have qualities that will affect management, training, and operations within law enforcement agencies across America. Thus, law enforcement leadership must develop a plan to address the internal and external demands that this generation will place on the agency's mission.

It is imperative that law enforcement leaders look for innovative ways to address these mounting issues. Those agencies that facilitate a plan to invest in their workforce will be the agencies that succeed during and beyond the dilemmas that we are currently facing. The public we serve continues to demand the finest service from the communities finest. An Individual Developmental Plans (IDP) places both the employee and employer in a position to sustain measurable growth both for the short term and the long term.

Resource and research materials from various sources were examined. This includes material from articles, university research, journals, and Internet sources. An IDP will not be the answer to all of law enforcement's current and future predicaments. However, it is training, mentoring, and educational tools that will have a high dividend yield. The installation of an IDP encourages the access and opportunity for growth for both the employee and the agency.

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## INTRODUCTION

It is imperative that governmental agencies maintain their ability to provide the best service possible for the public even during harsh economic times. An Individual Developmental Plans (IDP) places both the employee and employer in a position to sustain measurable growth both for the short term and the long term. The IDP is a custom-made instrument designed to provide the employee with a step-by-step process to accomplish organizational goals along with career goals. The IDP is a win/win for both parties. The employee has the opportunity to have an active role with defining their career path and developmental process. The employer has the opportunity to forecast future training needs and future workload capabilities.

In order to implement an IDP, the employee and a supervisor must evaluate the employee's current job knowledge and job skill. Once the assessment process is completed, all training opportunities should be identified then collectively a strategy will be designed to accomplish the task. The strategy should be created to aid the employee's ability to achieve the desired career goal and the employer ability to increase performance.

The future growth of the law enforcement professional, as well as their agency, should be the focus for all levels of law enforcement. The increased job skill and knowledge will only lead to increased service capabilities. The private sector has adopted this philosophy. These programs are designed to develop the employee's career for future growth for the company. All levels of law enforcement, (local, state and federal), must shift its focus to employee development. This will result in future growth and increased service capabilities for the organization. Many Fortune 500 companies

have embraced the notion of long-term education and training. The bottom-line benefits for these requirements are an increase in capital gain. The byproduct by demanding and embracing an extensive education and training process is professionalism.

The implementation of an Individual Development Plan (IDP) within the private sector is another extension to the educational and training aspects designed to improve their commerce. In 2009, General Mills was listed third as CNN Money's world's best company for leaders ("100 Best Company," 2009). Every employee including the CEO must create an IDP that maps out their personal development goals for the year ("Individual Development Plan," 2004).

Embracing these types of programs will allow the law enforcement community to continue to redefine its ability and its role in protecting the citizens from internal and external threats. Historically, the private sector has demonstrated the ability to alter its course to benefit the organization. Current conditions has forced law enforcement agencies to alter its course to meet the needs of the people it serves. The leadership field within law enforcement has done the same throughout its history. The implementation of an IDP is a necessary component for addressing these changes.

The law enforcement agencies across the nation are feeling the pressure of budget cuts, recruiting issues, and the retention of highly professional and effective officers. USA Today shed light on the decreasing conditions within the law enforcement community. They estimated that approximately 12,000 police officers will lose their jobs by the end of 2011 (Johnson & Jackson, 2011). These cuts mandated law enforcement to change from the way we have always done it, to new and forward thinking programs. The reduction of personnel within the agency can cause a rippling effect. The

community, the agency, and the law enforcement professional will all experience the stress from the amended budgets.

The law enforcement agencies will feel the effects of Recruiting Division's inability to recruit the most qualified person in the job market. The rippling effect will swell the amount of complainants and law suits filed against the agency. It is very possible that law enforcement professionals may receive collateral duties to accomplish the agency's mission. The community may experience a decline in quality service from the law enforcement agency. The International Association of Chiefs of Police reported that, "Over 40 percent of the law enforcement agencies surveyed about their budgets say that budget cuts will present a serious or severe problem for the agency" (Ward, 2011, para. 3).

Implementing an IDP program into the law enforcement profession will combat the issues of recruitment, retention, and growth for both the agency and the professional. The Department of Defense, State of Iowa, and the City of Dallas, Texas are among several other governmental organizations who have chosen to launch an IDP program. The IDP is a systematic approach to training and development designed to improve the employee's professional skills along with the agency's productivity (State of Iowa, 2008).

The budget cuts will most definitely reduce the size of many local, state and federal law enforcement agencies. The IDP is an efficient way to address the lack of police presence, reduction of quality services, and increased workloads that most departments could face due to shrinking budgets. Law enforcement must also address the needs of the Millennials who are entering the recruiting and selection process.

According to Susan A. Heathfield, Millennials want clear direction and defined goals. Heathfield (2012) added that Millennials expect to be triumphant with each task assigned to them by their superiors.

The law enforcement profession continues to evolve as society alters its norms and standards of life. The mission given to law enforcement since its inception has not changed much. However, the scope and standards have greatly increased over time. Agencies must make themselves available to meet the needs of society. Law enforcement agencies across the nation should implement an Individual Development Plan program within their agencies to increase the educational level for the law enforcement profession and produce higher quality service for the public.

## **POSITION**

IDP's should be implemented to address the needs of the Millennials in the work force, decreasing budgets, and expectation to provide a high level of service. Planning, difficult discussions, and meeting high exceptions are not new obstacles for the nation's finest. IDP's will be another tool that law enforcement leaders can use to address those concerns. Many law enforcement agencies currently engage in strategic planning. These plans encourage proactive thinking that anticipates changes for the future success (Barishansky, 2009). Individual Development Plan is a vital component within the strategic planning process. Forward momentum should always be a concern for law enforcement executives. A strategic plan offers flexibility during adverse conditions, gives the organization a sense of purpose, and establishes a foundation for future growth. Law enforcement leaders share the responsibility to the public as well as their



subordinates to continue to move the profession forward. All the while, providing a solution to higher demands for service and reduced budgets.

Strategic planning works similar to an engineer's blueprint. Law enforcement executives will benefit greatly from having the overall plan at their disposal. Strategic planning was introduced to the public sector in the late 1950s and early 1960s. The United States Department of Defense implemented strategic planning as a way to reduce wasteful spending as well as assessing the future needs of the agency (Young, 2001). The evidence above is clear with over 70 years strategic of planning in place within the government; it is time for it to be implemented throughout the law enforcement profession. The U.S. Department of Defense is a well-established governmental agency with goals very similar to America's law enforcement agencies, in that, they are required to protect their citizens in an ever-changing society with ever-changing rules and budgets. Engineers find it to be a rather complex task to build a trustworthy and commanding structure without blueprints. Law enforcement executives should be no different.

Henchey (2005) claimed that within the next eight years, most law enforcement professionals will be members of the Millennial generation (as cited in Mosman, 2010). Millennials look to the older counterparts for leadership. They also expect to be contributing members of the team (Heathfield, 2012). The implementation of the IDP is critical to the success of this generation and for the future of law enforcement.

Millennials have grown up with the desire to be a member of a team, to be flexible, task orientated, goal driven and technological advanced. These qualities afford the current law enforcement executives the upper hand when introducing an IDP

program into their respective agency. Millennial professionals will not only thrive within the program but will expect leadership to provide the structure for their future. The parents of the Millennials told them that they could grow up to be whatever they wanted to be. They were also told to make a difference in the world. Currently they have attempted the follow through with those values and goals they were given throughout their lives (as cited in Mosman, 2010).

Millennials have lived their entire lives managing technology, social networking, sports, other outside interest, and their education all at the same time. The IDP will give the Millennial professional the opportunity to monitor their career path as they incorporate the skills they learn into their normal day-to-day duties. The agency and the community will reap the benefits of their active personality traits. Utilizing the proper structure, Millennials will be able to deliver a higher quality work product than the previous generations.

The two generations that make up the current majority of the law enforcement profession are the Baby-boomers born from 1946 to 1969 and Generation X born between 1970 and 1981 (Van Brocklin, 2010). They too will obtain a benefit from entering into a career enrichment program. Research reveals that there is a difference in work ethics and values among Baby boomers, Generation Xers and Millennials (Patterson, 2005). Law enforcement executives are required to manage these diverse generations in the work place. Baby boomers tend to be optimistic, supportive and motivated when given a mission. The Individual Development Plan is designed to provide the baby boomer with the opportunity to take ownership in the road map to their law enforcement careers. Likewise, Generation Xers are independent and will feed off

the opportunity to select the training and educational routes that will affect their career advancement. Patterson, a PhD. training director for the Louisiana School Psychology Internship Consortium reported, "A team that allows choices and openly explores ideas, and whose members value learning, will better accommodate the needs and values of members of different generations," (as cited in Dittmann, 2005, para. 13).

The United States Equal Employment Opportunity Commission suggests several tips on employee retention. One suggestion listed was to create an IDP so agencies could ensure that all employees have equal opportunities to advance their careers. When agencies include these programs in their strategic plan, the employer improves the chance to retain employees who strive for excellence (U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, n.d.). Law enforcement cannot maintain the status quo if the profession is to progress. Recruiting and retention with the law enforcement field continues to be an area of contention. Agencies work really hard to get a qualified applicant but often the organization fails to retain that same employee.

Agencies employ many new costly tactics to recruit new law enforcement professionals. Some of those tactics can place a financial burden on the organization's already shrinking budget. Across the country, agencies are using signing bonuses, expensive recruiting videos, and new high tech equipment in an effort to persuade candidates to enter the field. Law enforcement cannot keep this pace up for long and some agencies have begun to abandon this technique due to funding. The IDP is a new and innovative way to contest the current issues facing law enforcement.

Branham (2005) detailed a list of reasons that, if addressed, would reduce the retention issues most organizations experience. Employees who voluntarily separate

employment list a few reasons for the change; poor job fit along with lack of coaching and performance feedback were listed among the top reasons (Branham, 2005). It should be clear that today's employees are requesting the employers to provide them with structure in their current position along with any future positions. The implementation process for the Individual Development Plan program will require effort. However, the benefits offered to the law enforcement profession will reshape the public's expectations and reward the profession with another victory.

### **COUNTER POSITION**

Opponents to implementing IDPs argue that law enforcement agencies are unable to add another program due to rapidly decreasing budgets. A Justice Department review outline indicated that law enforcement should see its first decline in jobs in 25 years (Johnson & Jackson, 2011). Law enforcement executives, along with federal, state and local government leaders, are under tremendous pressure trying to keep the ship afloat. In some places, waves have already begun to crest into the ship. Both large and small agencies have begun furlough programs in order to relieve the pressure.

However, some agencies across the nation have been forced to eliminate programs that were designed to enhance law enforcement services for the community. Budget cuts caused the City of Des Plaines police department in Illinois to near elimination of its traffic unit. Department leaders found ways to remain creative while remaining efficient and effective (Melekian, 2012). Law enforcement agencies must be resourceful while the public demands the same, if not higher, quality of service. The

budget and manpower dilemma are not typically a concern to the public. They will anticipate that the law enforcement executives will fix the problem and fix it quickly.

Preserving the achievements made with the community policing programs over the past two decades will be difficult without a fundamental restructuring in the service delivery model. It is time to rethink how law enforcement service will be delivered in the future. The International Association of Chiefs of Police provides evidence to this, "The alternative is to simply do 'less of the same' and wait for the economy to improve. In most jurisdictions, this will not be a viable approach" (Melekian, 2012, para 5). Law enforcement must reinvent itself if it is to stand on the age-old motto: "To serve and protect." Technology and civilian programs only serve as temporary solutions to the problem. The men and women, who have taken the oath to hold the line against all aggressors, both domestic and foreign, should be the ones we begin to reinvent.

Another counterargument against implementing IDP's is that it is increasingly difficult to retain current employee, especially the Millennials. The Millennial generation seems to desire to work less and play more (International Labor Organization, 2007). This generation could be the most educated generation we have ever had in America. They grow up with technology at their fingertips. However, their communication skills are sometimes overlooked. Their ability to network utilizing text messaging, email, Twitter, and Facebook is beyond compare to any communication skills of generations before them. Heathfield (2012) cited that Millennials thrive in situations where they can accomplish goals as part of a team. Mentoring and coaching cater to their learning style and their commitment to team (Heathfield, 2012). These attributes will prove important for the implementation of a IDP program.

As society changes, so must law enforcement. Departments across the nation should have the opportunity to offer mentorship to this generation through the IDP program. Training and education should be the main focus for law enforcement agencies: "Our society has become increasingly educated and it is necessary for police to keep pace with the larger public" (White & Escobar, 2008, para. 18). Advanced training and education is the corner stone for a steadfast solution. The most important aspect an agency has at its disposal is the men and women within its ranks. The Individual Development Plan is not the end-all, be-all initiative. However; education will always stand the test of time.

## **RECOMMENDATION**

In recent years, law enforcement has begun a transformation. The public along with the professionals within the agencies expect agency executives to be forward thinking and to have their best interest in mind. Agencies across the country are receiving smaller operating budgets; federal grants once used for crime fighting initiatives have also been on the decline. Communities that are losing law enforcement services will be affected by higher crime rates and community relations will regress. The current economic crisis that has hit local, state and federal governments has changed the course of business forever. The requirement to deliver the best service possible is a non-negotiable issue. Individual Development Plan is a tool executives can use to triage this problem that has infected every appendage in the law enforcement profession.

Millennials have begun to enter the work force and will be the majority of the active law enforcement professional. Thus, managing and leading this generation will

be a challenge unless provisions aren't made to effectively deal with the matter. Millennials are team players who possess a desire to give back to the community. This is a positive trait that will benefit both the agency and the community. They have the ability to multi-task and are the most technology-advanced generation to ever enter the workforce. On the whole, they need feedback and coaching from their (as cited in Mosman, 2010). Individual Development Plan can address all those concerns and provide the agency with a tool to project future agency growth. Agencies that are required to consolidate several positions into one can easily address those unions with the IDP. Unbalanced budgets and non-productive expenditures can be fatal to the capabilities of an agency. The ability to remain fiscally responsible is extremely critical. Forecasting training and equipment budgets in the future will be a tremendous advantage for executives. This capability allows law enforcement services in the United States of America to maintain the quality that the people are accustomed to receiving. The Law enforcement community should implement an Individual Development Plan to address employee retention, employee development, decreasing budgets, and to increase the quality of service law enforcement is required to provide to this Nation. This initiative will be the most effective program law enforcement has seen in the past twenty years.

In the Appendix are several forms that agencies can adopt or modify in order to initiate the first step to starting the IDP program. These forms are tools for the employee and employer to use as they construct meaningful discussions about the career development objectives for the employee as well as the organizational goals of

the agency. These examples are compilations from the Department of Defense and the Division of Personnel Department of Administration Services State of New Hampshire.



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## APPENDIX A

<b>INDIVIDUAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN</b>			
Employee Name	Current Position	Division	Supervisor's Name
<b>Section I - ORGANIZATIONAL ENHANCEMENT OR CAREER GOALS</b>			
<i>Short-Term Goals (1-2 Years)</i>		<i>Long-Term Goals (2-5 years)</i>	
<b>Section II - INDIVIDUAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN</b> <i>(Completed by Supervisor &amp; Employee)</i>			
Development Objectives needed to reach goal.	Developmental Assignments including target completion dates.	Other Activities	

<b>Section II -INDIVIDUAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN (Continued)</b> <i>(Completed by Supervisor &amp; Employee)</i>		
Development Objectives needed to reach goal.	Developmental Assignments including target completion dates.	Other Activities

**INDIVIDUAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN**

**Section III - Formal Training and Accomplishment Schedule**

Remarks	Formal Training (e.g. interagency, out-of-agency, private sector, correspondence, etc.	Projected Cost	Target Completed Date	Actual Completed Date
Employee's signature _____	Date _____	Supervisor's signature _____		Date _____
		<b>Note: This IDP is subject to change depending on availability of funds, courses, and candidate's requirements.</b>		
Mid-Manager's signature _____	Date _____			

