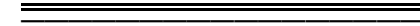
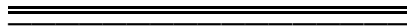


**The Bill Blackwood
Law Enforcement Management Institute of Texas**



Field Training Officer



**A Leadership White Paper
Submitted in Partial Fulfillment
Required for Graduation from the
Leadership Command College**



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ABSTRACT

Police work is the pivotal point of the justice system. The authorities, powers, and job descriptions must be perfectly balanced to keep the scale of justice balanced. Unfortunately, the scale is frequently tilted due to the actions of police officers. For the most part, the root cause of this unbalance is due to a lack of training or improper training. This all begins with the Field Training Officer (FTO) not being adequately prepared for the most important position in every police agency. According to research, most FTOs have less than two years of experience. FTOs are selected from the patrol schedule and sent to a 24-hour course developed by the Texas Commission on Law Enforcement (TCOLE). For the most part, that is the extent of the preparation for FTO. It is here where the justice scales begin to tilt.

The FTO should be the most trained officer in every agency. They are the architects that will pave the way for the future of an agency. The delicate balance of constitutional rights and civil liberties versus public safety start with the FTO. The focus of this paper is the selection and development of this significant position. This paper intends to redirect the attention of law enforcement executives to the FTO.

Since the beginning of the reform era, law enforcement focused on developing into a profession. This gave birth to standardized field training programs i.e., San Jose program (Moore & Womack, 1975) and Reno Program (Hoover, 2006) to reach that ultimate goal. These programs emphasize “the process,” and delineate guidelines, but, the substance is what the FTO brings to the program. The only way administrators can balance society freedoms and an individual’s rights is by centering their attention on the Field Training Officer.

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INTRODUCTION

The success of any organization is due to its most essential resource, its people. It is this core value that makes the difference between leading an agency into the future and managing it in day-by-day activities. It is essential for law enforcement leaders to focus their resources on developing the Field Training Officer (FTO). It has now been four decades since the first field training program was designed. The San Jose Model is a good example, developed by Lt. Robert Allen in 1971 (Moore & Womack, 1975). The reason for its development was to standardize the training of recruits. A second example was the Reno Model developed in 2000 (Hoover, 2006) with the assistance of the Department of Justice. Other models includes Houston (Houston Police Field Training Manual, 1980) and Travis County (Travis County Sheriff's Offices Training Manual, 1992), which modified some aspects of the programs. The models incorporate problem-oriented policing, community-oriented policing, leadership, ethics and many other facets of law enforcement.

Unfortunately, according to Means and Scott (2013), most FTOs have less than two years of experience. This leads to the first point, the lack of knowledge and selection of the FTO to embody all the categories in the field training programs. The selection process of field training officers is not given the serious consideration it calls for. Agencies should be searching for officers with both competent collective body of knowledge and a high level of emotional quotient (E.Q.). Whisenand (2011) states "For star performance in jobs, emotional competence is twice as important as purely cognitive abilities," (p. 5). The combination of cutting-edge programs and highly trained

field training officers enrich any agency. According to (Whisenand, 2011), “police leader’s emotions are contagious” (p. 5)!

The second point is the influences that FTOs have on impressionable young officers in shaping the future of law enforcement (Scoville, 2005). It is essential to understand that citizen complaints, substandard work, and malcontent attitudes are symptoms of an underlined condition. These issues can be corrected by selecting the right FTOs. Field training officers are one of the most influential individuals to a recruit.

The final point about training is the sense of value that helps reduce turnover and expensive lawsuits. In 1989, the US Supreme Court ruled that training police personnel was a critical managerial responsibility and not to be viewed as a luxury (McNamara, 2006). This leads back to the initial creation of field training programs: the quest to make police work into a profession. Training FTOs on ethics and leadership will lead to character and competence (Perez & Moore, 2012). The field training officer should be the most trained officer in the agency.

POSITION

The most valuable capital of any organization is human capital (Bennis, 1989). Law enforcement agencies typically place such high emphasis in the best field training programs. This is evident, based on the amount of police field training programs that are available. A good example is the Reno Model (Hoover, 2006) that targets an array of law enforcement practices and, in some cases, emphasizes different types of community-oriented programs.

The programs delineate the best philosophical approaches applying ethics, leadership and mentoring. Unfortunately, law enforcement leaders are so focused on

this programs that they neglect the delivery process, "The Who." The selections and developments of the field training officers are ignored. The FTO should be given the highest level of consideration in any agency. It is the common practice that police leaders choose officers who have a high level of knowledge or intelligent quotient I.Q. (Wyllie, 2017). These officers have a collective body of knowledge but at times lack emotional quotient (E.Q.).

According to (Whisenand, 2011), I.Q. can open many career doors but E.Q. will determine success. Law enforcement leaders need to understand that field training officers have such an enormous impact on the recruits. The training officer not only sets the tone for the rookies, but they also bridge the gap between the academy and patrolling the streets (Pruitt, 2010). Emotions are contagious and can energize enthusiasm thriving in the organization or cause dissent. Emphasis needs to be placed on the delivery process - the "Who".

The FTO with the right skills and traits will be able to deliver those comprehensive field training programs. Agencies need to funnel their resources to their human capital that possesses the qualities required to coach and mentor our millennial generation. If they fail to invest in their field training officers, agencies will find themselves with an inefficient police force and soaring citizen complaints. Some of which may result in administrative, civil or criminal litigations causing embarrassment and distrust to the organization.

Law enforcement agencies need to recognize that the most crucial position in the organization is that of the field training officer. These officers are responsible for molding the future and success of the agency. FTOs have a tremendous impact on the

newly hired police officer. As Means and Scott (2013) noted, 20-year-old males are not fully mature and lack wisdom. This is a perfect opportunity to coach and mentor novices in a community-oriented sense. Agencies are not meeting the needs of this generation due to the lack of understanding of generational differences. As Parrott (2016) noted, millennials are very knowledgeable but lack experience.

These opportunities can be reversed by properly training FTOs in the art of coaching and mentoring. Working among four generations, a leader must realize that each generation sees the thing through their perceptive lenses. There is no right or wrong, there are only different views. Agencies spend a considerable amount of money developing or incorporating comprehensive field training programs but continually deal with poorly trained rookie officers. The concern is not the programs, the problem is the delivering mechanism.

Most field training officers have an average of two years of service and lack training themselves. The field training officers should be the most highly trained officer in any agency. This should include officers who have a high level of emotional intelligence. Agencies must understand that passionate, intelligent officers who also possess comprehensive body knowledge make the best trainers. These officers' portfolio should include the top skills and traits defined in by Means and Scott (2013). Once FTOs are selected and have been trained in all facets, the department will begin to notice a positive change. This leads to a second reason why law enforcement leaders should focus on this crucial position. Law enforcement agencies will have fewer citizen complaints, increasing community confidence and trust.

As a consequence, the agencies' performance evaluations will be favorable meeting their goals and mission. A final reason to equip FTOs with the best training is to minimize employee malcontent. It is evident that a new generation is now incorporated into the workforce. FTOs that are adequately trained are apt to meet the expectations of this new and dominate production by increasing job satisfaction and reducing malcontent with younger officers. Agencies need to understand these new generations have completely different perspectives and are driven by internal motivators. Their needs must be satisfied, or agencies will miss out on creative and innovated individuals if the connection is not made (Parrott, 2016). By building a strong foundation and a positive role model, trainees can develop loyalty to the agency and the community (Wesley, 2014). This translates into saving money during this difficult time when you add the cost of hiring, training and equipping officers to solo status.

COUNTER POSITION

Many agencies have budget constraints and hesitate to increase training line items on their budgets (US Department of Justice, 2011). Law enforcement leaders continuously have to sacrifice their training line budget to maintain a balanced budget. They continue to assign two or three-year patrol officers to run the field training programs who lack the preparation. A note in the United States Department of Justice COPS (2011) reports about the significant budget cut. The report estimated 28,000 officers and deputies face furlough during 2010. It is expected that fifty-three percent of counties are working with little staff. Unfortunately, leaders take these types of risk in efforts to save the department money. They soon realized that training is a non-negotiable line item on a budget.

Many leaders miss out on opportunities offered by the federal and state government in forms of grants, free training, and free equipment. This assistance will help supplement money for other line items. Law enforcement leaders need to research the number of civil and criminal cases filed for failure to train. It has estimated that in 2006 approximately 30,000 law enforcement agencies sued for failure to train (McNamara, 2006). This practice, although, practical and inexpensive, will create problems for agencies and their local government. These pitfall and perils are costly for agencies according to (Harvey, 2015). Not only can these practices lead to humiliations and loss of credibility but they can also be expensive to agencies.

A second obstacle agencies encounter is the reluctances of qualified officers to become FTO's. Officers who are experienced and skilled typically advance to specialized jobs. They also avoid becoming an FTO because they understand the complexities and responsibility that are encompassed in training. An inherent misconception is that uniform divisions are not as prestigious (Means & Scott, 2013). This contributes to the reluctance of skilled and experienced officers not to volunteer for this prestigious position. This can be overturned quickly. A leader's initiative and creativity are required to motivated officers to take on this heroine responsibility.

It is documented that employees seek to be a part of solutions giving them a sense of purpose. Beside this purpose-driven attraction, agencies can also include incentive and preferential assignments. This will, of course, focuses on the eternal motivator that everyone has (Longoria, 2016).

Targeting both external and internal motivators will attract competent officers to the FTO programs. Leaders need to take the initiative to communicate the goals and

mission of the agency. Once the staff sees the commitment to the purpose, it is more likely that they too will commit to the vision the chief gives to a professional agency (Gilliland, 2016).

RECOMMENDATION

If law enforcement leaders want to lead a professional and innovative police agency they need to commit to selecting and training field training officers. Field training officers are architects for the success of any police organization. Field training officers should be the most trained officers in any agency. The success of an agency depends on the skills and traits of the FTOs (Means & Scott, 2013). A well-skilled FTO with good traits will instruct, train, and educate new officers about the job.

This is quite different than just showing officers the ropes (procedural). Showing the ropes is emulating what is seen, instilling education teaches individuals “why”. An illustration of this would be similar to a pottery master showing an apprentice how to make a vase. The master sits and begins to spin the clay on the spindle until the vase forms and then bakes in an oven. The master repeats the process until the apprentice can shape his vase. In this case, the master is only showing him how to create a vase (procedural). The full success master will educate his apprentice by teaching him on the composition of the clay and consistency. The master will instruct him on the speed of the spindle to avoid any defects on the finished product. After the product is completed, the successful master will counsel the apprentice to heat the oven at the proper temperature and bake the product for the right amount of time, any deviation from those instructions will compromise the finished product.

In law enforcement, the master is the FTO. They are given the big responsibility of educating the novice. When agencies confront excessive use of force or violation of civil right, those are only the manifestation of our failure to educate. Officers lack the knowledge of the “why”. That is when officers have a hard time defending their action and use inappropriate means because they were never educated on “why” (substance) instead only shown “how” (procedural).

This type of behavior is described by (Perez & Moore, 2012) as inept - not necessarily criminal behavior. To reduce litigious payout, the leader must stop neglecting the essential position of the organization. Law enforcement is a profession, which continues to evolve from day to day. When FTO's are equipped with high-quality training and educated on different subject matters such as; leadership, ethics, policy, procedural and statute laws and possess high emotional intelligence, it equates to a competent FTO. Research continues to show that high EQ people interact well with everyone (Perez & Moore, 2012).

The counter positions mentioned earlier about reluctances and complexities of character and generational gaps are opportunities, not problems. Highly-trained FTOs will mold the future and success of the agency. Concerning budget constraints, it is important to realize that agencies will either pay by planning during budget meetings or be obligated to pay by a court at law. The evidence is overwhelming with the number of lawsuits filed against agencies for failure to train.

Leaders also need to remember that state and federal government provide free training for law enforcement in addition to grants and equipment. Research has proven repeatedly that employees who were vested by their employer are loyal employees.

This, too, will keep the cost of the agency down in the form of turnover. Law enforcement scholars and academia for years have researched the root causes of crime, hence the birth of problem-oriented policing. These philosophies of analysis root causes of crimes in communities have accepted a form of policing.

Unfortunately, again, law enforcement has missed the opportunity to use this same philosophy to manage their agency. When agencies deal with malcontent officers, and citizen complaints, agencies are dealing with the manifestation of a deeper cause. Agencies typically choose an FTO who lacks both the skills and traits causing a chain reaction. Leaders need to incorporate new and creative approaches to field training and Set priorities on staff that possess the qualities to become a trainer.

Fortunately, research has discovered that emotional intelligence is a skill that can be enhanced. Without the proper delivery mechanism, even the most comprehensive programs will fail. Law enforcement leaders need to look outside the public sector and apply some of the practice used in the private sector. By doing so, they will understand that citizens are customers and the delivery of exceptional customer service is essential.

Bennis (1989), states each employee is, to a remarkable extent, the organization in miniature. Police chiefs must understand that officer failures are the reflection of leadership. According to Perez and Moore (2012), without ethics there is no competence and vice-versa. It is only ethical and competent that police chiefs place a high value on the position of field training officers. Everyone is bound to benefit from this endeavor. A professional and competent police force will increase the citizen support and gain their trust. The officers will have a sense of loyalty to the organization

as well as to the chief. The organizations internal working will be much more efficient. It is well documented that happy employees are much more successful decreasing the turnover rate. The police leader will enjoy having accomplished the pinnacle of his career. To become a leader who inspires pride and passion is the great legacy a top-level executive strives for.

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