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Lateral Entry for Mid and Upper Management Positions

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ABSTRACT

This paper points out positive aspects of filling mid and upper management positions, within a law enforcement agency with experienced and qualified personnel from outside the agency. Throughout the years, the vast majority of law enforcement agencies have limited their field of mid and upper management applicants to “only” personnel who work within their departments. This research describes the potential profits gained by opening these positions to personnel from other agencies.

Information gathered for this project came from books, studies and professional journals within the law enforcement field. Based on information gained through this research, lateral entry for mid and upper management positions within the field of law enforcement is an extremely beneficial practice. Lateral entry is highly recommended for the selection of mid and upper management personnel within the law enforcement field.

Introduction

The purpose of this research is to document the potential benefits and positive aspects of using a “lateral entry” concept to fill mid and upper management positions within law enforcement agencies. This lateral entry concept is defined as the ability to hire an individual, from outside a particular law enforcement agency, who possesses the education, experience and qualifications for the management position.

The future of law enforcement rests on the ideals and concepts of command level officers within the law enforcement community. Command level decisions have become increasingly difficult and complex. Policing in today’s society has dramatically changed. Drugs, gangs, family issues and juvenile crime trends have forced departments to seek innovative solutions to community problems. These changes, along with shrinking financial resources, should force law enforcement administrators to seek the most qualified person to fill the mid and upper management positions within their department's. All too often, a department’s progression slows or ceases due to internal politics or paradigms unique to each department. The lateral entry concept is a needed and important element in the progression of law enforcement in Today’s society.

Law enforcement is one of the few fields which fails to take advantage of the educated and experienced professionals who are capable of introducing innovative concepts through experience gained by working at other departments. Unfortunately, many experienced and educated police officers stagnate in their field due to the lack of upward mobility at a particular department. These are the same officers that we have invested time and money to hire and train. These individuals routinely opt to change careers, rather than start at the bottom with another

department. Lateral entry would enhance the mobility in the field of law enforcement, providing opportunity for motivated individuals and healthy competition for higher ranking positions.

This paper is written for the intended audience of mayors, city councilmen, city managers and chiefs of police. The documentation provided in this project was gained through professional journals, books and surveys.

This project is not intended to recommend the elimination of intra-departmental promotions of command rank positions. This paper is intended to promote the concept of selecting the best person for the job. This paper will point out the positive aspects of considering both internal applicants, as well as qualified applicants from outside agencies, to fill mid and upper management positions.

Historical, and Theoretical Context

On January 1, 1934, Joshua Pratt was appointed the first police constable in America. Today, after years of law enforcement history, one would have expected progression in police personnel administration. This is not the case. Although we have progressed in recruitment of entry level personnel, there is far too much rigidity when it comes to the selection of management or supervisory personnel (Hewitt Sr. 1975).

Historically, mid and upper law enforcement management positions have been filled by utilizing the Classical Theory to promote individuals to a higher rank. The Classical Theory involves a step by step process to fill all ranks, up through captain, by using existing personnel from within each respective department (Bopp and Whisenand 1980). The classical theory of promotion has been routinely examined through the years. The classical theory has shown to be ineffective in providing the most qualified person for the job. Researchers have strongly

maintained that lateral entry for management positions (hiring personnel from outside the department) should be used to insure that the most qualified person fills the position (Wilson, McLaren 1977).

In 1979, an article in Crime and Justice in America pointed out a list of seven essential requirements which must be fulfilled in order for a particular occupational field to be qualified as a profession. The last requirement on the list is mobility. According to the writers, the field of law enforcement is not a profession because of our lack of mobility (O'Rourke and Nolan 1979). Since this article was published, the field of law enforcement has moved very slowly, if any at all, towards enhancing the area of mobility. By using the lateral entry model, the field of law enforcement would come much closer to being regarded as a profession. The practice of hiring experienced and trained law enforcement personnel from outside agencies to fill mid and upper management positions would be an extremely progressive step. This change from the classical theory of promotion would insure the selection of the most qualified manager, instead of having to settle for "just a promoted patrolman".

Unique and innovative managerial skills are desperately needed in law enforcement agencies in today's society. To be an effective manager, one must be able to blend the contributions that are made by each of the functional specialities within the department. These managers must be capable of having a vision of the future that is realistic but challenging, and communicating that vision effectively both outside and inside their department. In order to possess these skills, police managers have gained graduate degrees through colleges and universities, as well as completing national programs designed specifically for the law enforcement community (Moore and Stephens 1991). These experienced and educated managers exist

throughout America. Establishing the lateral entry concept would promote the mobility of these managers and enhance competition for mid and upper level management positions.

The concept of lateral entry of mid and upper management positions, allows the career minded, educated officers to have an enhanced opportunity for advancement within our field. These officers would have the opportunity to compete for higher ranking positions with other departments. As it stands, career minded officers, all too often, leave the law enforcement field due to the lack of opportunity for upward mobility within their own department. It appears that these officers choose to change occupational fields, instead of losing their seniority just to start at an entry level position at another department (National Advisory Commission on Criminal Justice Standards and Goals 1973).

The lateral entry concept may also create the opportunity for what is known in the business world as the mobile manager. The mobile manager is described as the type of individual who wants to succeed in the field of management and administration. This type of manager uses prudently, a rear view mirror that tells him what he has done successfully and a telescope that predicts what must be done today to prepare for the future (Emerson 1971). These managers rate themselves on the effectiveness and efficiency of the organization they manage.

Review of Literature or Practice

The issue of lateral entry has been studied very little in the field of law enforcement. This research identifies five significant studies that take issue with the lateral entry concept. In 1967, the report to the President's Commission on Law Enforcement concluded that only through the achievement of a career corps of educated professional executives, with governmental perspectives and a variety of experience, can law enforcement hope to cope with its task (Hewitt,

Sr. 1967). The movement of career personnel between jurisdictions is a vital and urgent objective to the best possible staffing of police service. This report lists over 28 leading police administrators who support lateral entry for law enforcement. This committee did qualify its indorsement of lateral entry by stating that lateral entry should be used only when and where necessary. This report mentioned that the “closed” civil service systems tend to breed mediocrity, sterility, isolation and self-protection.

The report cited the following advantages of lateral entry:

1. Attracts professional personnel.
2. Develops a fresh point of view.
3. Saves training time.
4. Bolsters management and technical strength.
5. Disturbs the status quo. Thereby avoiding complacency.
6. Is easier to measure executive performance.
7. Creates better understanding of law enforcement affairs.
8. Offers personal advantages to the individual (Hewitt, Sr. 1967).

This report was specific in addressing the profits which could be gained by adopting the lateral entry concept for management positions. This report also pointed out that lateral entry should not be used in all cases; however, it should be used when necessary.

During 1960 and 1961 a survey was conducted of all police departments, sheriff departments and the California Highway Patrol. This survey received 292 responses out of 368 requests made to law enforcement agencies. This survey revealed that 72 agencies permitted their personnel to take a leave of absence from their department in order to take a position with another law enforcement agency within the state. There were four main reasons that the departments would allow for this lateral transfer. Lateral transfer was allowed for:

1. Health reasons.

2. To accept promotions.
3. For educational purposes.
4. To change residences in order to enjoy off-duty time more.

These agencies realized that profits could be made from such transfers due to the fact that chiefs of these participating agencies do not always have qualified personnel to fill technical or administrative positions. Or, because of the size of the department, the chief could gain a more qualified person for the position (Waldt 1960-1961).

A 1971 survey of California law enforcement agencies revealed an overwhelming support for lateral entry for entry level officers. A sufficient number of California law enforcement agencies have used this “entry level” lateral entry concept successfully for a number of years and recommends serious consideration on a national bases. “It would be beneficial to extend lateral entry to all levels of service, thereby creating a “talent pool” of professionals capable of lending their expertise to the entire system of government”(Germann 1971). This survey recognized the benefits of broadening the field of applicants to fill all levels within the department.

In the fall of 1989, the Justice Center at the University of Alaska published a study of Alaska’s police chiefs regarding their career mobility (Angell and Endell 1981). This study indicated three obvious methods of career mobility. These methods were identified as:

1. Multi-Agency Path Model.
2. Inside Path Model .
3. Lateral Transfer Path model.

The Multi agency Path model is the most common route for police executives within the Alaska Department of Public Safety and chief of police positions in most mid-size towns (10,000 to 25,000 population). This model indicated that a person would serve as a municipal police officer in a mid-size or large department for a period of 1 to 3 years. At the end of this service,

this person would obtain employment as a sworn Alaska State Trooper and advance, at least to the rank of Lieutenant. At this time the person would leave this agency and either seek a position as a police chief in a large department or an upper management position in a private company. Depending on this person's success at this point, he or she could return to the Alaska Department of Public Safety as Commissioner.

The Inside Path Model is the second most common route to police executive position in Alaska. To reach the top, one must serve in one or more specific positions within each promotional rank. Moving from position to position within each rank is not considered a promotion; however, failure to spend time in appropriate positions throughout these ranks forecloses the possibility of acquiring the executive office.

The Lateral Transfer Path Model is followed by top executives in police departments of cities of less than 10,000 population. Ambitious officers who obtain entry level employment in these organizations must be aware that lateral entry transfers involving geographic relocations will be necessary for the success of obtaining the position of chief of police. This model provides for the selection of the most educated and experienced person for the job (Angell and Endell 1981). It is important to note that the Multi-Agency Path and Lateral Entry Path Models considered applicants who demonstrated success in their field, as well as experience gained through management outside of a single agency. It is just as important to note that the Inside Path Model sought personnel who had gained experience through one or more positions within each rank. All of the path models in this survey considered broad experience as being essential in the promotional process.

Out of all of the law enforcement agencies within the United States, the California law

enforcement agencies seem to have made some headway in addressing the area of mobility. A 1982 research indicates an increasing number of law enforcement agencies have opened competitive examinations for the rank of captain, which are open to any law enforcement officer with proper qualifications (Leonard 1982).

Discussion of Relevant Issues

Filling mid and upper management positions with the most qualified person is a primary issue of this research. The benefits of hiring mid and upper management personnel from outside the agency are numerous. This practice would increase the channels for promotion. This process would foster incentive and enthusiasm for the job, knowing that the opportunities for advancement are greater than before. It would also enhance police morale and encourage a career service. Lateral entry would widen the field of candidates for supervisory, command and administrative positions in the police service. Finally, the police service would become more attractive to police candidates when they realize that channels of promotion are amplified (Scott 1965).

In our society, professions are singled out by their adherence to specific requirements. These requirements, which must be satisfied for a field to be identified as a profession, are:

1. A fund of knowledge
2. Training facilities
3. Admission standards
4. Organization of practitioners
5. An ethical code
6. Self-regulation
7. Mobility (O'Rourke and Noland 1979).

Mobility is a key mark of a profession. Law enforcement has all of these requirements except mobility. Mobility not only brings together professional application of a discipline, but it enhances

the discipline through varied experience. A doctor, lawyer or business administrator can work at their profession anywhere in the country at any time. "Law enforcement is not a profession, despite all the high talk throughout the field"(O'Rourke and Noland 1979). If we are going to bring the field of law enforcement to a professional status, we must utilize mobility through lateral entry effectively.

The issue of mobility through lateral transfer, holds very close to the issue of personal needs. Maslow's Need Hierarchy indicates two particular needs which are directly effected by the mobility issue. These needs are "Social needs" and "Self-fulfillment needs" (Luthans 1972). The social need concept relates to a person's need for belonging, association and acceptance. The self-fulfillment need relates to one's own potential, growth and self actualization as a completed human being. The lack of mobility greatly diminishes a person's potential to gain acceptance, belonging and association at a higher level in the law enforcement field. The lack of mobility greatly suppresses the potential for success due to the lack of opportunity (Luthans 1972).

The goal of satisfying the mobility requirement of professional standards is an important issue of this research. Mobility in law enforcement has changed very little, if any, throughout our nation. For the most part, mobility is limited to the highest ranking administrator and the lowest entry level personnel. To reinforce this point, the FBI National Academy (FBINA) completed a survey of graduates. Questionnaires were sent to 807 law enforcement personnel who had graduated the National Academy between July 1981 and December 1987. Responses were received from 642. In the area of career patterns, this survey indicated that personnel promoted to middle management ranks were primarily intra-departmental. The great majority of promotions to top executive level positions were gained by transferring to another agency (FBINA Survey

1990). This survey indicates that graduates of the National Academy were available for mid management positions, but were seemingly unused as candidates for lateral entry.

The lack of mobility creates many disadvantages in our field. It keeps us from being recognized as a bonafide profession. The lack of mobility slows the growth of our management and organizational procedures and philosophy. Finally, it keeps law enforcement in an era of stagnation at many levels; from administrative and organizational readiness, to the stagnation of those good officers which we selected so carefully, who cannot see advancement because of the constraints placed on a department's internal promotional process (O'Rourke and Nolan 1979).

The two main issues which could be looked upon as constraints involving officers who may consider lateral entry are loss of benefits and the cost of moving. The issue involving the suspension of the employee's benefits relates to the loss of accumulated sick time and vacation allotment over a period of years. Another issue involves the possible loss of one's pension. Finally, the cost of selling a home and moving to another geographical location is certainly a consideration (O'Brien and Marcus 1979). Although there are some constraints involved, the option of lateral transfer certainly affords law enforcement personnel the opportunity to make prior arraignments in career planing. Problems involving the police pension or retirement systems could well be worked out at the local or state level.

The cost analysis and benefits of the lateral entry model for mid and upper level management is very positive. Agencies who take advantage of lateral entry will gain years of training and experience at no real cost to the department. Although, this may force cities, counties and states to offer a more competitive salary, the loss of training time and fees are saved.

Conclusion/Recommendations

The purpose of this research paper is to point out the benefits and positive aspects of utilizing external, along with internal applicants to fill mid and upper management positions within a law enforcement agency.

Law enforcement agencies throughout the nation exhaust extensive amounts of time, money and effort in hiring recruit officers for their departments. These efforts seem to pay off in relation to the caliber of patrolmen we receive; however, most agencies tend to dramatically limit their resources in attempts to find leaders for those officers we so meticulously hire. At some point in the progression of law enforcement, we must realize that patrolmen were not hired for their management abilities. We must also realize that our future and effectiveness is balanced on the abilities of the mid and upper command personnel of our agencies. We must widen our pool of applicants for these command level positions and choose the best person for these extremely important jobs.

Today's society is very demanding. Law enforcement agencies are forced to change their policing tactics at an ever increasing rate. New crime trends and social problems cause law enforcement to routinely alter their focus in order to maintain society's standards. Because of the lack of available funding, law enforcement is increasingly faced with the dilemma of providing effective service for less cost. With these, as well as other barriers to cross, it becomes extremely important to staff mid and upper management positions with the most well educated and experienced people available. Unfortunately, the majority of law enforcement agencies feel compelled to fill the mid and upper management positions with only the personnel from within their department. Some agencies have no control over their promotional process because of

government mandates of civil service policies; however, those agencies that can take advantage of the pool of talented, available personnel will benefit greatly.

The surveys in this research indicated that agencies who have utilize the lateral entry system, found it to be extremely effective. Some of the advantages of lateral entry are: enhanced mobility in the field, brings law enforcement closer to a professional standard, increased opportunities for maximum individual development, encourages the sharing of experiences of common problems, attracts professional personnel, develops a fresh point of view, saves training time and enables an agency to receive an educated and experienced professional manager, instead of “just a promoted patrolman”.

In conclusion, lateral entry for mid and upper command level personnel appears to be a very positive, progressive and needed step in today’s law enforcement. The purpose of this paper is not to abolish intra-departmental promotions; moreover, it is recommended that the lateral entry concept be employed along with the intra-departmental promotional process to ensure selection of the best person for the job.

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