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Effects of Positive Discipline

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ABSTRACT

Positive discipline is a tool, that when used has many benefits to an organization. There are many positive outcomes from employees when a positive discipline model is utilized. These positive attributes are increased morale, self-discipline, additional training, and better attitudes from the employees. The use of positive discipline can also increase productivity and vision, and at the same time reduce the fear of punishment, which allows employees to take risks to advance the organization. If they fear negative discipline then they will not take chances in their positions and can be unproductive.

The positive discipline model should be used to correct behavior for employee actions and mistakes. The use of positive discipline enhances any form of discipline that is used. Positive discipline helps both the employees and the department to succeed in their goals. The use of negative discipline is very commonly used in police departments. In some cases, the use of negative discipline is inevitable, but it should be used in conjunction with the ideals in the positive discipline model. Implementation of a positive discipline model does not eliminate punishments it just adds a list of positive procedures to use, to gain compliance and correct behaviors from employees.

The use of the positive discipline model will improve the agencies personnel by providing additional training, productivity will increase, and the employees will be a lot happier at work. This makes any organization stronger and more effective at providing the service that they provide. There is absolutely no reason to not use positive discipline in any disciplinary system. The benefits of using positive discipline will save time, money, reduce liability, and produce a better work environment for everyone.

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INTRODUCTION

Discipline is a major and crucial part of life and employment. There is discipline in the home, at school, at work, and even in the public. Discipline is very necessary for order in all parts of society. The main goal of discipline is to guide behavior to an acceptable level in all parts of people's lives. The focus of this paper will be looking at the use of positive discipline when disciplining employees. It will show how a positive style of discipline can have a beneficial impact on an organization as well as the employees themselves.

Using positive discipline in the workplace can improve attitudes, morale, and performance. For the purpose of this paper positive discipline is defined as; "A systematic approach, designed to instruct and/or guide, so that they become loyal, dedicated, responsible, and productive employees" (Miller, Braswell, & Rush, 2017, p. 90).

Typically, discipline is punitive in nature. These punitive actions do not always correct the problem. Positive discipline is used to stimulate a change in behavior through other means, not just punishment. As some research shows, "The focus of discipline is predominately punishment, not behavior change" (Stephens, 2011, p. 6). Employees tend to perceive the thought of discipline as a negative situation for them, passed down by the administration. Employees that hear that they are going to be disciplined expect punishment not rehabilitation, "To the average person, the word "discipline" carries a connotation of arbitrary and severe enforcement of rules and regulation laid down by those in authority" (Gourley, 1950, p. 85). Discipline used in a negative way gives consequences for actions in an attempt to correct those actions.

According to Fitch (2009) negative discipline is seen at the intention on punishing someone so they will correct the behavior or actions that they have done.

Positive discipline has a different effect on people. Positive discipline is used to stimulate a change in behavior through other means, not just punishment. Using a positive discipline model builds trust and a sense of fairness for employees. Positive discipline is more of an attitude and mindset than just a practice. There is an emphasis on training, rehabilitating, and recognizing performance of employees. This leads to improved actions and behaviors for those employees within an organization, which leads to a better, more efficient organization. This helps both the employer and the employees.

There are situations where it is understood that forms of discipline that involve punishment are necessary. Certain violations by employees require some kind of punishment from written reprimands all the way up to termination. Certain situations leave an administration's only option of punishment to be punitive in nature to achieve the appropriate reaction to the conduct by an employee. According to Coleman (2003), the use of positive discipline is a good model to utilize for first time violations, but repeat offenders of policies and procedures would need a different course of action. (p. 51).

There are different ideas and methods of discipline in which all have strengths and weaknesses, but the need for positive reinforcement can be an incredible asset to an organization. The addition of a positive discipline model can also assist an organization in the progressive discipline process. The positive discipline model should be used to correct behavior for employee actions and mistakes.

POSITION

Using positive discipline can help the morale of officers in a police department. Positive attitudes and high morale are great components that make up professional, effective, and efficient police departments. Positive discipline can help create an atmosphere where employees respect their superiors and in turn have a good performance record. According to Black (1970), when the managers have gained the employee's attention and respect there is increased discipline and morale of the employees (p.48). Positive discipline can boost morale and have a great impact on an agency. According to Gocke (1945), high morale is a benefit because it increases efficiency by voluntary methods and excitement, not through fear of punishment (p.216).

Sometimes it is forgotten that we are all humans and using positive discipline can show the intent of helping and rehabilitating instead of just punishing. Employees react to punishment, but it does not always have a lasting positive effect, "A punitive approach to the matter of discipline is an admission of defeat even if it is temporarily successful" (Black, 1970, p. 54). This has a great impact on a person's morale and attitude towards their work. In turn, this has a positive impact on the organization that has used the positive discipline model. Fitch (2009), stated that "Positive discipline is more an attitude and atmosphere than an action is a tool not a weapon."

Discipline is necessary in all organizations. There is a difference discipline and punishment that departments seem to not recognize, "Discipline helps officers meet expectations and stay within reasonable performance and behavior limits. Punishment on the other hand, is usually initiated to alleviate managerial frustrations. Discipline, as opposed to punishment, does not hinder an employee's self-esteem." (Field & Meloni,

1999, p. 85) The use of just punishment can lower morale and performance from officers. "Punishment for misconduct is appropriate at times, and it may lead to behavior changes, but it also brings resentment and at times contributes to the sense of unfairness that many officer have about how discipline is handled." (Stephens, 2011, p. 6)

Positive discipline increases the training that officers receive. The well trained officer understand the mission, goals and expectations of the department and will be more productive and have good attitudes. Positive discipline is based on correcting behavior when there is a violation of policy and/or procedures that have been established by the police department. The use of positive discipline teaches the proper and appropriate skills and/or procedures to the officer that has committed the violation. "Where the police officer is seen "as an asset, one who should be retained for many, many years to come", and where the intention is "to redeem the police officer by reeducation" (Coleman, 2003, p. 50).

A specific example would be, if an officer has a minor traffic crash while backing, the officer could be sent to a driving course that would not normally be taken, to receive appropriate and focused training to improve the officers driving skills and awareness while backing. The idea is to correct the behavior not just punish the officer for the infraction. This type of disciplinary action can improve the officer's abilities as well as mentally encourage the officer to do better without the negative impact of punishment based discipline.

The additional training also adds training hours to the departments continuing education hours provided. Many times the additional training for officers that have had

incidents that cause this training sparks a need in the department. If several employees have the same issue and are scheduled for extra training in an area, the department may see a trend in that area. This may lead to additional training for everyone in the department to combat the potential issue. This can lead to additional training in that area. This is a benefit to the department and the officers.

Well trained personnel have traits of self-discipline and have positive attitudes. Positive discipline is based on correcting behavior and teaching the proper skills and/or procedures, not just on punishment for an infraction. The ideas in negative discipline are punitive in nature. Violanti (2011) stated that punishment based discipline procedures commonly used in police departments have little impact in actually resulting in lower performance from employees, less commitment to the department, and disgruntled employees in the department. This is not good for any part of an agency.

Using the model positive discipline improves recognition in the department. Positive discipline is not only a formula for correcting improper behavior but a system to reward and recognize good behaviors or actions that an employee may do. Positive rewards can be as small as a pat on the back to awards and medals given for outstanding performance. Positive recognition can be contagious. Positive recognition is very rewarding to the individual that is the recipient of an award or recognition. This also stimulates self- discipline in employees. When the atmosphere in the work place is positive then the attitudes of the employees tend to be positive. People with a positive attitude tend to have a high level of work performance. Everyone likes positive interaction with administration. Positive accolades make people proud and increases

their willingness to perform at a high level. "Behavior rewarded is behavior repeated" (Grote, 2006).

One of the biggest benefits to the organization is that positive discipline assists with the progressive discipline steps. The goal is to correct behavior through the positive discipline through training. If the behavior of an employee does not improve with all of the positive and then negative discipline, and if the discipline has to lead to a termination, the administration will have all of the documentation for the foundation of the actions. All of the documented training, remedial training, and discipline that was used to attempt to correct the employee's behavior will reduce the liability of the department if litigation occurs.

COUNTER POSITION

Many law enforcement agencies feel that negative discipline is the only way to punish employees. A definition of negative discipline is, "That form of discipline which takes the form of punishment or chastisement is known as negative discipline" (Pranzo, n.d.). Some organizations see negative discipline as the way to correct behavior of problem employees. Police Departments have rule and regulations to dictate behavior from its officers. "These rules and regulations are highly desirable, but in and of themselves they are not an adequate base for a sound discipline" (Gourley, 1950, p. 86).

Negative discipline is a model that is widely used to punish employees for the mistakes they have made. People believe that there has to be consequences to actions and punishment is the way to obtain corrective actions and/or behavior. "Telling employees what is expected of them and explaining the negative consequences they

may face is an absolute requirement for effective discipline in law enforcement” (Miller, Braswell, & Rush, 2017, p. 78).

Negative discipline is seen by some administrators as the way to uphold the integrity of the police department. The punishment shows that the department took action against the officer and some sort of punishment was given. Negative discipline is easy, swift, and is an efficient way to punish employees for their actions.

Negative discipline is very common and easily understood, especially in law enforcement. Law enforcement is directly involved and a part of the criminal justice system. The criminal justice system utilizes negative discipline for violations of the law. Arrests, citations, and convictions to jail or prisons are all examples of negative discipline that is used by the criminal justice system.

The rebuttal for negative discipline, is that the use of only negative discipline is not always effective in achieving the desired result and behavior changes. Just punishing employees for every violation does not always fix or address the incident in the appropriate fashion. The prison system is an example of why just using negative discipline principles does not work in many cases. Fitch (2009) stated, if punishing people made people act better, then most people released from prison would not continue to commit crimes. A study about this topic showed that more than two-thirds of released inmates were arrested again for criminal behavior within three years.

A criminal that is convicted of a crime goes to jail or prison to serve time for his/her crime. This is the punitive punishment for the act committed. Many times studies have shown that punitive punishment does not change the behavior of the punished person. Convicted offenders that go through the jail or prison system do not

learn from their mistake or action. They repeat their behavior and end up in trouble with the law again and again. The use of just punishment has not corrected the inappropriate behavior.

Another example to use positive discipline over negative discipline is, using rehabilitation programs in prisons is to the criminal justice system as training is to the model of positive discipline in employment. The training and counseling programs are supposed to give appropriate information to the offenders to give them the tools needed to not repeat as an offender, just like the training provided to an officer is to help them correct their mistake so they do not repeat the same violation. The use of positive interactions does have a greater effect on correcting behavior.

An additional counter position is the use of a discipline matrix to determine punishment. A discipline matrix is a model sometimes used, but is typically negative in nature. A chart is used to calculate the discipline of violations of policies and procedures by officers. It takes into account the seriousness of the violation along with the previous record of the violator to determine a punishment that is consistent with others that commit the similar type of violations. A definition of a discipline matrix is, "A discipline matrix is a formal schedule for disciplinary actions, specifying the presumptive action to be taken for each type of misconduct and any adjustment to be made based on an officer's previous disciplinary record" (Walker, 2004, p. 1).

The use of a discipline matrix is seen by some as a way of making negative discipline fair and equal to all employees. A discipline matrix is a system that has specific punishments for certain types of negative behavior or actions, and adjusts automatically for officers with previous discipline. The purpose of the discipline matrix is

to be consistent across the board, so everyone will receive similar punishment for similar actions.

Each individual agency can develop their own matrix that fits their department and its needs. The matrix is a simple but complex document that addresses all violations of conduct and/or behavior and the consequences for the violation of that conduct and/or behavior. The reason it is complex is because the matrix covers such a vast number of potential violations. The matrix is simple because it provides the degree of punishment for the given violation taking all of the possible scenarios, multiple violations, severity of violation and repeated violations. The punitive consequences are charted in the matrix with each type of violation. The supervisor has no leeway on what discipline to administer. The punishment is spelled out in the matrix. This takes away the ability of the supervisor to be influenced or play favorites to his/her employees. There is no special treatment for those that maybe liked or friends with the supervisor or the administration.

The rebuttal to the use the disciplinary matrix, is that most discipline matrixes are only punitive in nature just like negative discipline models. There are not positive discipline techniques built into the matrix. All they are doing is making it systematic and a fair way of using negative discipline, punishing the employees. All that would have to happen to make the discipline matrix a very effective tool, is to add a positive discipline aspect to the matrix. For lower level and minor violations, and those type of violations that are skilled based, additional training can be used to attempt to correct the actions or behaviors before moving to the punishment phases of the matrix.

RECOMMENDATION

There are a number of reasons that police departments should use a positive discipline model in their structured disciplinary procedures. There are no reasons not to incorporate positive discipline into any disciplinary system. The positive discipline model should be used to correct the behavior for employee actions and mistakes. Discipline is an important part of an organization and its employees. Without discipline, there can be a great break down of structure, behavior and actions. It would be almost impossible to run any type of organization with no forms of discipline in place.

Employees need structure and rules to follow to lead them to the ultimate goal of the organization. The use of positive discipline in the discipline structure gives a number of benefits to the organization and the employees. Positive discipline increases training of employees being disciplined and also can lead into additional training for other employees. Positive discipline can lead to higher morale through the fair and considerate treatment of minor infractions.

This leads to greater self-discipline of other employees because they see the positive attitudes and morale of others. The recognition aspect of positive discipline will increase the number of commendations and awards given. All of these items gives structure to the agency and shows a fair process in dealing with issues with policy and procedures. The trust level being increased due to the fairness that is shown will increase the overall performance of individuals and the group as a whole.

It is understood that there is a need for both positive and negative consequences in the discipline process for Police Departments. Police Departments can not only use only negative or just positive discipline in their disciplinary procedures. With the

addition of positive disciplinary steps in the procedures, it will make the discipline more effective for the employees and the organization. "Positive discipline should be seen as only one of a number of possible responses available to police disciplinarians, and its use should be limited to cases which it is appropriate" (Coleman, 2003, p 50). A punishment phase of disciplinary procedures may be necessary for major or repeated violations.

There are certain types of policy, procedure, ethical, and criminal infractions that the use of positive discipline may not be an option. But, the initial positive disciplinary procedures in the positive discipline model should be evaluated first on those infractions. The severity of many violations and/or repeated violations in the same category makes a punitive action the appropriate option. "When positive methods fail to achieve conformity with accepted standards of conduct or performance, a negative type of action, punitive in nature, must follow to preserve the integrity of the organization" (Pranzo, n.d.).

Negative discipline is a very common method of disciplining people in law enforcement. Unfortunately for those agencies they are not making the best disciplinary choices for their employees. It effects morale and motivation. When all a supervisor gives out is negative discipline only negative results will occur, in many circumstances.

The same with the discipline matrix models that are geared towards negative discipline. The idea of the matrix is to make it fair and consistent for everyone. This is a step in the right direction, but positive discipline steps need to be added to the matrix to make this form of discipline more effective for the employee and the organization.

There is nothing negative about adding a positive discipline model to any discipline structure already in place at a police department. It can only add a positive nature to the process. Increases in morale and productivity can be seen. Additional training is a benefit to both the employee and the agency and it shows that the agency is doing all it can to make the employee successful. Positive discipline is definitely a practice that will help an organization achieve goals and objectives while supporting a good work environment.

Having the best disciplinary procedures can help law enforcement agencies the best trained, most enthusiastic, and productive officer to serve the community and its citizens. The use of the positive discipline model can be a benefit to any organization. There is nothing taken away from discipline by adding a positive component to nay system. It will strengthen the organization, its employees, and the output of the employees. Morale and attitudes will be higher which leads to numerous benefits for everyone involved.

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