

LAW ENFORCEMENT MANAGEMENT INSTITUTE

CAREER DEVELOPMENT:  
ROTATING JOB ASSIGNMENTS  
(A PERSPECTIVE IN MODERN POLICE MANAGEMENT)

A RESEARCH PAPER  
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## **STATEMENT OF PURPOSE**

The objective of this research paper was originally designed to give participants of the Law Enforcement Management Institute of Texas, the opportunity and experience to conduct actual research on a topic of his/her choice and then present the information in a written format. A second objective was to develop this assignment into a product that someone else might be able to use. Hence, the very real possibility of having a written article published.

The topic of this research paper (Rotating Assignments), was based on this writer's experience in the management hierarchy of his own department. The most common question that emerged from the review of the department is whether any or all of the managers in the department should be periodically rotated among the various assignments of the organization. Simply stated, this writer intended to find out whether a "Manager is a Manager is a Manager".

This question focuses on two significant ideas that are intensely debated within the department. First of all, "Should all managers be transferred through various positions whether they want to be rotated or not?" Secondly, "How is this practice going to be accomplished, especially when a manager in a particular position does not want to move, is not interested in advancement, and is doing a good job?"

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## I. INTRODUCTION

In the world of business, there is a theory which has been advanced that suggests "A Manager is a Manager is a Manager." The underlying philosophy dictates that a successful manager should be able to manage people rather than specific jobs (tasks). Therefore, if a manager is able to manage one group of individuals successfully, there is no reason to believe that the same manager cannot successfully manage another group of people working on dissimilar tasks.

This same theory might also be applied to Management in Law Enforcement. A Lieutenant assigned to Patrol is responsible for the smooth operation of his command. By utilizing good management practices, and relying on the same from his first line supervisors (Sergeants), the Patrol Commander should be able to function successfully in his/her role. At the same time, a lieutenant assigned to another division or bureau such as investigations, might naturally function effectively without direct experience in investigative responsibility. The theory "A Manager is a Manager" would indicate that a successful Patrol Commander could also be a successful Investigation Commander, and vice versa.

The future for most Law Enforcement Managers may be dependent on the amount of experience they have had in various management positions. Looking at it from this standpoint, the manager who is able to manage people successfully in one area

of responsibility should be able to achieve a similar success in another area, even with little hands-on experience in that field. After all, the manager does not perform the actual tasks, but oversees the completion of them. Naturally, it would be more beneficial for the new Commander to seek the knowledge and skills that his/her subordinates must possess to complete their own tasks. This is not to say that a Commander has to be an expert or authority in his division (Patrol, Investigations, Support, etc.), but an accurate working knowledge of what the employees' job is, may be critical.<sup>1</sup> In other words the manager must know what it is that the employee does. By receiving training in a specific area (such as Undercover Narcotics Investigation), the manager will be able to make informed decisions concerning any related topic.

## II. CAREER DEVELOPMENT

If the theory "A Manager is a Manager" is accurate, it may be necessary to develop and train prospective managers from the lower ranks. This approach might consider a number of variables associated with the professional development of police managers, such as specialization interest, departmental need, and officer talent.

It is generally a given that an individual will develop different interests and differing points of view, depending on the particular area of responsibility. A successful manager may be partially dependent upon personality as well as interpersonal skills.

### III. MOTIVATION

The development of successful managers can only be achieved through voluntary compliance, meaning the willingness of prospective managers to develop themselves and for higher managers to allow younger managers to grow and develop. Among the most important personal motives are a need for achievement, affiliation and power. Individuals must feel a sense of competence in dealing with individual development and mental health. Competence becomes, in the course of development, a highly important nucleus of motivation.<sup>2</sup>

### IV. INTERPERSONAL SKILLS AND GOAL OBJECTIVES

At the lowest levels in the organization some believe human effectiveness is highly influenced by technology and control systems. The effectiveness of the First Line Supervisor is also significantly influenced by these same factors. However, the higher one climbs the managerial hierarchy, the less technology and controls influence their behavior, the more job objectives and interpersonal factors influence the effectiveness of executives (managers).<sup>3</sup>

### V. DECISION-MAKING SKILLS

Decision-making is one of the most important managerial skills. The need for intelligence, self-confidence, emotional maturity, ability to obtain and utilize information, and the vision to apply decision making techniques, all place a significant burden upon the Manager.<sup>4</sup>

## VI. EFFECTIVE MANAGEMENT LEADERSHIP

The essence of management leadership is the ability to identify the needs of work groups and to meet these needs in ways conducive to optimal productivity.

J.D. Williams, a notable management theorist from the University of Utah, gave a version of effective management leadership configuration by discussing two major roles for leaders; a) task roles and b) maintenance roles.<sup>5</sup>

a) **Task roles** consist of two specific functions:

- 1) Goal setting, and
- 2) Selection of means

Goal setting, according to Williams, is the opportunity of leadership to not only be a conveyer belt between legislature, agency and public, but in positively initiating, and influencing, suitable public policies which can capture the imagination and energies of employees. Through shared goal setting, workers become "involved" and involvement "leads to commitment". At all levels of an organization managers must face the task of arranging people, information activities and technology. In other words, they must define and design work.<sup>6</sup>

Selection of means is the second function of task roles to be performed by effective leaders. Effective leaders should delegate the authority to work groups to develop workable procedures, identify practical methods, and determine the sequence and pace of work steps.

b) **Maintenance roles** in Williams' analysis consist of three significant functions:<sup>7</sup>

- 1) Personal support of workers' needs
- 2) Representing them before political authorities
- 3) Improving interpersonal relations

Personal support of workers is a key element which the effective leader should be able to help his workers overcome personal problems, to appreciate their working conditions to understand their supervisors role, and to elevate the workers perceptions of the "job" to a meaningful and worthwhile career.

Representing workers before political authorities is another way to build credibility among employees. Effective leaders are expected to be able and willing to fight the workers' battles with City Hall.

Improving interpersonal relations among workers suggest that effective leaders should improve the quality of group life and build cohesiveness and resolve conflict. The key to effective leadership lies in the definition. "The ability to inspire other people to work together as a team, following your lead, in order to attain a common objective".<sup>8</sup>

## VII. THE ROLES OF A MANAGER

According to Henry Mintzberg, a manager is defined as that person formally in charge of an organizational unit.<sup>9</sup> On managing an organization, Harold Geneen offers a three sentence course on Business Management. "You read a book from



the beginning to the end. You run a business the opposite way. You start with the end, and then you do everything you must to reach it".<sup>10</sup>

John Wallace Hunt wrote about the two ideas that form the foundation of the "Theory of Management".<sup>11</sup>

- 1) Managing is getting things done with and through People.
- 2) The functions a manager should perform are:

Planning - Allows us to design for an uncertain future with some assurance of achieving our goals.

Organizing - Assess the tasks to be done, allocate tasks to people, and integrate the tasks into a whole work system.

Directing - The process of leading, motivating, delegating, cooperating, disciplining, and communicating to name a few.

Controlling - The design of feedback loops, the recording of deviations from plans, and the correction of deviations.

It may be useful to clarify a manager role as a total effort to coordinate the work of others, so that all can achieve the objectives of the activity. Effective managers manage themselves and the people they work with so that both the organization and the people profit from their presence.<sup>12</sup>

According to the One Minute Manager, there are only three secrets to remember when it comes to effective management.<sup>13</sup>

**One minute goal setting**

**One minute praising**

**One minute reprimand**

One Minute Goal Setting - What they are accountable for and what good work looks like.

One Minute Praising - Try to catch them doing something right so you can give them a one minute praising.

One Minute Reprimand - If they have the skills to do something right and they did not.

- 1) Reprimand as soon as mistake is made.
- 2) Specifies exactly what is wrong (discourages sloppiness).
- 3) Attacks behavior, not person (prohibits defensive behavior).
- 4) Consistency - reprimand mistake, even if other things are going well.<sup>14</sup>

#### VIII. KEY TO GOOD MANAGEMENT

According to the "One Minute Manager", the key to good management is to "remember that people are aware, think for themselves, and do not want to be manipulated by any person. A manager helps people work better and in the process they benefit the organization".<sup>15</sup>

#### IX. ROTATING ASSIGNMENTS

As the author has alluded to earlier in this article, the police department in which he has worked for the past 12 years (Midland), is currently utilizing a rotation system. At the present, all upper level managers (Deputy Chiefs and Lieutenants) have all been rotated at least once. There has been no absolute or set time limit placed on these assignments, but the Chief of Police (Richard Czech) has

tentatively set a three year rotation, pending further study and development.

The department has been for some time now, debating the topic of rotation among First Line Supervisors. Recently the question has also arisen in regard to rotating officers as well.

This paper was primarily intended to focus on Police Managers. However, the author does believe that what is brought up in this article can also apply to all echelons within the department.

#### **X. THE ROTATION SYSTEM**

The question that has plagued this department has been, "Should all managers be transferred through the various available assignments the department has to offer? If so, how is this best accomplished?"

From talking to members of the department, the author has found about a 50/50 split on whether a rotation system should be utilized. On one side, employees welcome the change and feel as though it is another step achieved in their personal career ladder. According to others, it comes as a personal affront to them and is unacceptable. Like anything else worthwhile, there are always going to be "proponents" and "opponents".

##### **Those In Favor**

This author has talked to a large number of the 153 sworn personnel within this department about rotation or has at

least overheard numerous conversations among all areas (assignments) within the department. The following list is a compilation of ideas that have cropped up in defense of rotation.

Pros:

1. Increases morale in some people.
2. Promotes individual development.
3. Breaks the monotony (routine).
4. Prevents stagnation.
5. Develops well rounded individuals (builds managers).
6. Prevents elitism, cliques, etc.<sup>16</sup>

According to an article found in the April 1992 FBI Law Enforcement Bulletin (by Lt. Tom Gabor), the experience gained through rotating positions better enables someone to make knowledgeable decisions that benefit the department as a whole, rather than just a small part of it.<sup>17</sup>

**THOSE OPPOSED**

On the other hand, according to impromptu conversations among department members, the author has cited the following concerns of those officers that oppose rotating assignments.

Cons:

1. Disrupts normal routine.
2. Some people just do not want to change.
3. Viewed by some as a form of punishment.
4. Change just for the sake of changing.

## **XI. IF I WERE CHIEF**

After spending time reading different books and articles on management and conducting a number of personal interviews with associates of the Law Enforcement Management Institute and fellow members of the Midland Police Department, the author believes that he may be able to offer a rotation plan that would satisfy the majority of officers in a department. The following information is a direct result of the research and personal interviews conducted by the author. This plan is not totally original, but it incorporates some of the ideas and philosophies of organizations such as the Los Angeles, California and Midland, Texas Police Departments. Individuals such as Richard Czech (Chief of Police - Midland), Morgan Robnett (Graduate of the Management Institute), and Doug Moore (Ph.D, Sam Houston State University), all gave insight or made the author think critically in relation about rotating assignments. Based on this information the author presents the following plan for rotating personnel.

### **Rotation at the officer level:**

Immediately following an officers probationary period (including FTO phase), the officer would be provided a counselor or mentor from within the department to help determine the rookie's career path.<sup>18</sup> The two career path choices would be:

1. Management-oriented career development program.
2. Specific job-oriented career development program.  
(Career patrol, traffic, investigations, etc.)

### The Management Oriented Career Development Program

This program would be run very much like that of the Los Angeles Police Department. Once the officer decides to pursue a career as a Police Manager, most in-service training would be geared towards developing that officer into a manager.<sup>19</sup> This program would facilitate those eligible for promotion and those that aspire for advancement.

### The Specific Job Oriented Career Development Program

In this program, the officer would receive in-service training geared towards achieving a specific function such as career patrol, community service, career detective, etc.<sup>20</sup> This group would probably consist of the largest part of members of the department. It may include some Sergeants and Lieutenants that are contented with their status (the Peter Principal may be present, or they do not seek additional responsibilities).

When an officer reaches a personally acceptable level (or assignment), the officer should be allowed to stay, providing a concomitant level of productivity and action in that capacity. To avoid burnout or stagnation, officers are given the opportunity at anytime in their career to switch from one system of development to the other.

Now this writer understands that not everybody is going to be happy with everything a chief does. However, by always using three simple principles, any chief should be able to satisfy the vast majority of his troops. Lou Holtz, the

famous Notre Dame Football Coach always teaches his players to:

DO RIGHT. DO YOUR BEST. DO UNTO OTHERS.<sup>21</sup>

**Rotation at the Managers Level:**

As far as the upper levels of Management are concerned it makes little difference where they start out. Midland Police Chief Richard Czech seems to lean towards placing the newly promoted in Patrol.<sup>22</sup> After a period of 2 or 3 years, several of these position are rotated.

Managers (including mid-management) would be rotated in the interest of career development. Those managers that wish to promote (advance) would rotate throughout all Bureaus within the department in order to gain valuable experience and develop managerial expertise. In the Midland Police Department, this group of managers consists of Sergeants and Lieutenants. Presently, all of our 42 supervisory positions are subject to rotation.<sup>23</sup> In the author's opinion, the rotation should incorporate only those supervisors (managers) that aspire to promote since we all have seen individuals that have succumbed to the "Peter Principle" (the manager that has reached his highest level of competence). There are also those that do not wish to promote or transfer for one reason or another. When officers are transferred against their will, their faith, trust, and support cannot be restored without difficulty. Not everyone wants to

be a top level manager, so a Chief Administrator should groom only those individuals that are looking for advancement.

At the Deputy Chief level, the Chief of Police would rotate all of these positions at least every 3 years.<sup>24</sup> This rotation would be mandatory. By rotating throughout each Bureau, these personnel would soon be prepared to become the highest level of Managers. At this level of management, a Deputy Chief would have been selected for competence, enthusiasm, and energy. In this light, a Chief or City Manager would be looking for a "Mover and a Shaker".

Earlier in this paper, the author alluded to the theory "A Manager is a Manager". This statement has been supported in personal interviews with several people associated with the Management Institute. In a personal interview with Dr. Doug Moore (Sam Houston State University, August 1991), it was explained to the author that "A Manager is a Manager" providing that manager has enough knowledge or expertise to make intelligent decisions in the particular assignment. In simple terms, as long as a manager knew what was expected and had a working knowledge of what the employees did or were suppose to do, the manager should prove to be effective.<sup>25</sup>

In a separate interview with fellow L.E.M.I participant Morgan Robnett (Ph.D, GMI; Sam Houston University, August, 1991), the author found another supporter of the "Manager is a Manager" theory. Dr. Robnett believed that an individual that was an effective manager in a particular area in a police



department would in all sincere probability, be equally competent in any assignment in that department.<sup>26</sup>

#### **SUMMARY**

In discussing the idea of rotating assignments, this writer has intended to show that an effective manager can manage any division or bureau within his department. This philosophy dictates that, by allowing the continuing development of an individuals self esteem through motivation, developing interpersonal skills, and the use of common sense and good judgment, an effective manager can fulfill personal goals up as well as those of aspiring subordinates.

The basic theories of management have also been discussed. Planning, Organizing, Directing and Controlling were identified as basic functions or duties of a manager.

The heart of this paper dealt with the topic of rotating assignments. Although the paper was originally intended to deal with management level personnel, discussion included officers of all ranks. The pros and cons of a department-wide rotating system mentioned in this article may give an idea of what to expect if another agency were to consider starting up a rotation program.

Finally, the author discussed his ideas on how he would handle rotation if he were in a position to conduct such a program.

## END NOTES

- <sup>1</sup>Paul R. Lawrence., and Jay W. Lorsch. "Organization and Environment - Managing Differentiation and Integration". Harvard University.
- <sup>2</sup>David C. McClelland. "The Achieving Society". Princeton: Van Nostrand Co., 1961.
- <sup>3</sup>Moment, David and Abraham Zaleznik. "Role Development and Interpersonal Competence: An Experimental Study of Role Performance in Problem-Solving Groups"., 1963.
- <sup>4</sup>International Association of Chiefs of Police. "Police Supervision". Page 65. I.A.C.P., 1985.
- <sup>5</sup>J.D. Williams. "Management Begins With Man". Publisher: Little, Brown and Co., 1971.
- <sup>6</sup>Ibid.
- <sup>7</sup>Ibid.
- <sup>8</sup>Ibid.
- <sup>9</sup>Henry Mintzberg. "The Nature of Managerial Work". New York Harper and Row, 1973.
- <sup>10</sup>Harold Geneen., and Alvin Moscow. "Managing". Publisher: Doubleday, and Co., Inc., p.33. New York 1984.
- <sup>11</sup>Ibid., p.128. (Geneen, quoting John Wallace Hint's "The Theory of Management").
- <sup>12</sup>Ibid., p.128.
- <sup>13</sup>Kenneth H. Blanchard. Ph.D and Spencer Johnson. "The One Minute Manager". Publisher: William Morrow and Co., Inc. New York, 1982.
- <sup>14</sup>Ibid.
- <sup>15</sup>Ibid.
- <sup>16</sup>Tom Gabor. "Rotation, Is It Organizationally Sound". FBI Law Enforcement Bulletin, April 1992. P.18.
- <sup>17</sup>Ibid., P.18.
- <sup>18</sup>Jim Reynolds, Lt. Midland Police Department, Interview during Career Development Committee Meeting.

<sup>19</sup>Los Angeles Police Department (area of Development Program).

<sup>20</sup>Ibid.

<sup>21</sup>Public Speech by Nortre Dame Football Coach, Lou Holtz.

<sup>22</sup>Chief Richard Czech, Midland Chief of Police Supervisory Staff Meeting.

<sup>23</sup>Ibid.

<sup>24</sup>Ibid.

<sup>25</sup>Doug Moore, Ph.D - Sam Houston State University, Interview at SHSU, LEMI - Module III, August, 1992.

<sup>26</sup>Morgan Robnett, Ph.D, GMI, Interview at SHSU, LEMI - Module III, August, 1991

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