

**The Bill Blackwood
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The Feasibility of Employee Incentive and Recognition Programs

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ABSTRACT

Management is responsible for the attitude that officers have toward their job. This attitude can be nurtured by motivating the officers with rewards and recognition. This motivation is necessary since many officers have been in the same job for years and boredom and complacency are probable results.

This paper will strive to show some types of incentives that are budget compatible. It will also illustrate how incentives and recognition can increase productivity by channeling the energy and attitude of the department.

This paper was accomplished by drawing from the author's knowledge of law enforcement and from personal experience in what motivates police officers. Research was conducted and information was collected from business management texts, law enforcement officers, lecturers in law enforcement management, law enforcement periodicals, and from other policy research projects.

This research has shown that incentives and recognition are integral parts of law enforcement, and that they can be achieved with little or no expense to management. Once the policies are in place, the result will be a rejuvenated work force, with a fresh attitude and increased productivity.

Introduction

An employee incentive and recognition program is the rewarding of employees for performing the tasks they were hired to accomplish in the first place. This revealing philosophy was subscribed to by a former supervisor, but it is not an idea that is held by the author.

Incentive and recognition programs are a function of management. It may not be needed in all aspects of a particular law enforcement agency, but it should be utilized if it can increase team building as well as productivity and efficiency. It could also increase morale.

The following project is intended to illustrate that management in law enforcement, like any business entity, needs to recognize its most valuable of all assets, its people (Campanelli, 28). The project will also illustrate some of the results of incentives and recognition. The area of focus will be the recognition that is needed by law enforcement officers in certain situations. Officers that continue to remain in same job description after years of employment is one area that affects many departments. The primary recipient of this project is the chief of police of the Leon Valley Police Department. It is hoped that it will be of possible value to any other law enforcement agency with similar needs for its officers.

This project was accomplished after research was collected from numerous up to date periodicals from business management, that would be suited for law enforcement. In addition, reference books on incentive and recognition in the private sector, law enforcement monthlies, law enforcement officers, and management lecturers were also used to develop this project.

It is hoped that this project will illustrate that law enforcement officers, like salespeople, account executives, factory workers, and other civilian employees, often need some type of incentive and recognition to keep them working as a team.

Theoretical Context

Conventional styles of management are not working as they did in years past, when one looks at them in light of the ways that life has changed, and the new thoughts of what motivates people today (McGregor, 217). Just as there have been vast changes and advances in the world of science, there have been changes in the way employees view their job (McGregor, 221-222).

It should also be noted that managing and motivating people, is much more complicated than some may think. People differ greatly from each other. Every person has their own goals and needs. People change, but at the same time they do not like changes placed upon them (Nicks, 2). As man has evolved, his needs have changed. His needs change daily. It is hard for someone to worry about status or love, if he has not eaten in some time. Once he has eaten, the man is satisfied in this need, and then seeks to find a way to satisfy his next need (McGregor, 224).

This satisfied need is not a way to motivate someone. The need that is not satisfied is the one that motivates people. The next level of needs may vary, but they generally revolve around security, things that are more or less guaranteed to people in their job. Once these needs are satisfied, people tend to have social needs that are continually a motivating factor, since they include recognition for a job well done, for acceptance by peers, and for a sense of belonging (McGregor, 224).

There seem to be as many ideas on how to motivate people as there are experts in the field. One such idea is to put more focus on the employees. Give the employees more responsibility. Let them be involved in the decisions that affect them. Make them feel like they are a part of a team with common goals. Treat them with respect and this will lead to making the employee feel important (Stephenson, 112).

Another area that is likely to energize employees is trust. Along with the responsibility, trust

employees to get things accomplished on their own. This will free up the supervisor to deal with bigger issues, and will allow employees to enjoy their job (Oddey, 7). Going hand in hand with this trust is the asking of employees for their opinion (Oddey, 7). This display of trust lets the employee know that someone is not continually looking over his shoulder. It lets him feel that he is more independent. The author believes that trust is one of the most important areas to develop in any relationship, whether it be law enforcement, government, or in a marriage. Trust itself is recognition of a job well done. Trust sets the tone which dictates success or failure. How can you operate without it?

If employees are to be given incentives and recognized, they must also have a clear goal toward which to strive . In the striving to attain these goals, positive reinforcement is also necessary to progress (Case, 7).

Just as in science, there is a need to be aware of one cause and effect relationship that could be as bad or worse than the lack of recognition itself. That is the fact that one should be careful about the type of behavior for which employees are rewarded, because that is the type of behavior that will ultimately be received (Fiechtner, Module 1).

One example of this would be to reward officers for the most traffic tickets that are written in a month. This would greatly increase revenues as the number of tickets increased. The problem would be that none of the other patrol work would get accomplished. There would be no residential or business patrols, and burglaries, for example, would eventually begin to escalate.

One expert in the field of management and motivation is Bob Nelson. Nelson works for a management consultant firm, and deals with motivation on a daily basis (Eisman, 41). He believes that management should give incentives to those people that show extra effort that was not

mandated, but came from the employee themselves. An example might be staying late, when they were not asked to, but did so to help their co-workers. Working without a break in order to finish an assignment, would also rate, according to Nelson. Bob Nelson believes that these incentives do not have to be costly. Lunch coupons, free dinners for two, or inscribing a motivational book as a gift, are just a few of Nelson's ideas. He believes, too, that recognition does not just have short term benefits, like keeping the work force more productive, and encouraging cooperation. It will also have long term effects. Nelson believes that if this caring attitude is recognized by the employees, they will be less likely to move to another job, thus decreasing turnover. Why would an employee want to quit if he was happy where he was, and believed that his employer was happy with him (Eisman, 41)?

Review of Literature or Practice

When trying to decide what type of incentives and recognition might be the most successful in a particular agency, the key factor is the effect it will have on the budget. Dr. Robert A. Davis of Texas A and M University did a survey of over 400 Motorola employees, to find what type of recognition they preferred (Davis, Module 1). In his survey, Davis asked what type of recognition was preferred the most. The choices ranged from a merit increase to a pay bonus, from free meals to time off with pay, and from a pat on the back from supervisors to tokens (cups, ink pens, and so forth) (Davis, Module 1).

The greatest response was for the pat on the back (Davis, Module 1). This response illustrates that what the employees wanted was recognition, in front of their peers. What is important is the fact that someone, hopefully a supervisor, is telling them that they did a good job in front of other employees. It shows that they belong to the group, and, if the group is successful, it shows that

they were a part of that success. It also illustrates that it is not always money that plays the biggest part of an incentive policy (Beach, 218). It should also be noted that second on the list of preferred recognition choices was the receiving of tokens (Davis, Module 1). Again, this shows that if they are awarded this cup or this pen by their supervisor, then they have done a good job, and here is the proof. Every time they drink coffee from the cup or write with the pen, others will recognize the token as a symbol that they too will strive to attain, and hopefully will respond in kind.

What this means is that the greatest motivator is recognition. Respect for the individual employee and recognizing his accomplishments is the key here (Caudron, 12). A practical example of motivation was experienced by the author. In the summer of 1996, residential burglaries seemed to be an unending problem. The rate of burglaries was not on the increase, but it seemed that something could be done to make the patrolmen more aware of suspicious persons and vehicles, that could be potential offenders in residential areas.

The author then arrived at an idea that could help the problem. A used softball trophy was transformed into a burglary trophy. At first, a small bowling ball was attached to a key chain on the leg of the figure on the trophy. This symbolized a ball and chain, as prisoners were purported to have worn in years long passed. The trophy was awarded to the officer that was instrumental in apprehending the burglar. An officer would be allowed to display the trophy above his locker, or on the shift sergeant's desk. Shortly after this was announced and put into effect, officers apprehended a group of vehicle burglars after a long and arduous search. The trophy was then awarded to the entire shift of four officers. The momentum of the prestige the trophy represented began to grow.

Officers would approach the author and ask if their recent actions would warrant an award of the trophy. They would inquire what shift or officer was "up" for the trophy. Shortly thereafter,

the chief of police asked that the trophy be awarded for any type of action for a shift or an officer that apprehended subjects for whatever offense, that illustrated skills for which the officers should be commended. The trophy was off and running. Residential burglaries later dwindled down to almost nonexistence. The officers were in friendly competition, but they were also drawn together as a shift, as a team.

As an aside, it should be noted that the officers began to add things to the trophy itself. A horseshoe was attached to the side. A Dare ribbon was tied to the figure. A photo of a dog was attached after "dog watch" captured a group of burglars. This was an indicator of team building. It is also proudly noted that the author won the trophy twice, as awarded by the assistant chief.

The trophy gave the troops an incentive to look for things they might have otherwise overlooked or explained away. They wanted the trophy and wanted to be recognized for what it represented: excellence. The trophy is now a very gaudy piece of conglomerative memorabilia, but continues to be a venerated symbol of officer achievement.

One police agency has another type of recognition that is given to its officers that displays what the individual has accomplished. The Rio Vista police department has a policy, (in their department manual), that uniform ribbons are awarded for actions ranging from saving a life, to master police officer, to rookie of the year (Johnson, 1998).

The most immediate result of the awards, was the increased pride that officers took in their uniforms (Johnson, 1998). From his own experience, the author has discovered that pride in how one presents himself, is often an indicator of how the person feels about himself. This pride is the forerunner of a good attitude, which is closely linked to this type of recognition policy.

Additionally, the uniform awards give officers an incentive for an attainable goal for which

to strive. The officers know that if they continue their education and have been employed long enough, they will earn a master's certificate in law enforcement. They know that then they will be permitted to wear a ribbon on their uniform showing what they have accomplished. These awards show people that do not know the officer, what he has achieved, and it gives them incentive for this type of recognition (Johnson, 1998).

A study was done by Frederick Herzberg called The Motivation to Work. Although it was published in 1959, it has long since stood as a benchmark in discovering what factors affect the attitudes of workers toward their jobs (Van Dersal, 79). The research conducted, asked employees to rate the items that made them feel good about their jobs. The top two items (ranked in order) were achievement and recognition (Van Dersal, 81).

The National Science Foundation examined over 300 studies about job satisfaction, performance, and pay. The final outcome illustrated that motivation and productivity increase when performance and remuneration are tied together. One section showed that performance recognition raised productivity 43%. when incentives and rewards were added to positive reinforcement, productivity rose 64% (Losyk, 185). Even in animals, it is known that rewards strengthen the learned reaction, and also motivate performance (Miller, 296).

It is also obvious that today in law enforcement, the department must be very efficient, and yet stay within its budget. The most important link in this endeavor is the middle managers, sergeants, in many locales. These are the people that need to stay motivated since they are the ones that implement policy from above and also manage the end product; service to the community (McHugh, 21-23).

Discussion of Relevant Issues

The recognition that an employee receives has a major influence on his attitude. The author believes that incentives and recognition foster motivation and attitude. Attitude and motivation are, at times, indistinguishable. A good attitude is reflected in the employee's work, and shows him to be motivated. Conversely, when one is perceived to be motivated, one can be assured that he has a good attitude, at least toward his job.

To motivate an employee, one of the first areas to be considered, is what is causing the lack of motivation. An employee may not be motivated due to boredom in the job, a lack of interest in the job, laziness, or a feeling of lack of appreciation.

The most fundamental reason that employees are happy with their work is due to their recognition of a job they have done well (Lacey, 6). Of course the best recognition comes from the employee's supervisor, but this motivational tool is greatly enhanced when it is presented with co-workers in attendance.

What all of the studies, surveys, and research illustrate, are that the employee works harder and more efficiently with public recognition. The recognition does not have to be money. With today's budgets the way they are, it may be difficult to have a recognition policy that costs anything. How much does it cost to give the officer of the month a covered parking space that the department has anyway? It has been shown that the burglary trophy (or substitute any other type of trophy that you wish) costs literally nothing.

If a department did want to spend a little money, then the cost of a coffee cup, a t-shirt, or even dinners for two a month, are not big budget issues. It should be remembered, however, that the other main ingredient to the motivation process, other than the reward, is the recognition that the

employee receives when he is presented the reward in front of his peers. Additionally, the reward that "lingers", such as the coffee cup and the t-shirt, or even the covered parking space, are reinforcement of the recognition, and the employee can show this off for a longer time period.

Motivation, however, cannot flourish without the positive attitude from middle and upper management. They must show that they are not only credible, but they must always have a positive attitude to allow their subordinates' motivation to grow. If a supervisor is not committed to his troops, they will not be committed to him (Lindo, 14).

At times, an employee may seem to be lazy. One possible reason could be the attitude he has toward his job. He may need to be shown just how important his job is to the department. No job should ever be talked about as being anything less than valuable. A supervisor that knows his employees as he should will know when something is not quite right, and he should be able to discover what that problem is, and then address it. A good supervisor knows his employees, and he must fix anything that is broken (Weiss, 18).

The quicker a supervisor understands a situation regarding his employees, the quicker he can begin to motivate his employees and correct it (Rice, 23). It should also be noted the supervisor should not overlook how recognition can motivate. All supervisors know that they can always find something negative about an employee to correct. It is the same with recognition. They should always be able to easily draw attention to the employees' areas of strength. This shows the employee that his supervisor cares. This is a key ingredient to motivation (Rice, 25).

The motivation that works the best is self-motivation. If a supervisor can motivate his troops to perform their tasks because they "want to", rather than because they "have to", he has mastered his primary responsibility, and this becomes self-perpetuating (Belker, 129, 130).

Conclusion /Recommendations

There is a common thread that runs throughout this idea of incentives and recognition. All of the things that have been illustrated in this paper relate to attitude. One could even say that a policy of incentives and recognition is the act of changing the officer's attitude to conform to your's.

Police officers, like other members of the working America, from time to time, need to be recognized for their accomplishments. It is an attitude adjustment. Even though one would think that police officers lead an eventful, ever changing workday, they can still get bored, knowing they are in the same job, day after day.

Giving the police officer incentives is important, because it shows him what goals that management has set for him. It gives him a clear path to follow. These incentives can increase productivity through friendly competition. Competing for a burglary trophy, working toward their master police officer certificate, or being recognized at a patrol meeting for a good job, are all signs that the officers are properly motivated.

Officers that have been in the same job for a long period of time, can work themselves into habits; some are good and some are not as good. With a recognition and incentive policy, a spark is added that can take the officer out of the doldrums and perk him up with a clearly defined goal.

An incentives policy doesn't have to be expensive. It can be as cheap as a free trophy. It could be a covered parking space for officer of the month. The point is that it is something that gives the officers a goal for which they can strive individually or as a shift, and, at the same time, be recognized for it.

The policy as discussed, shows the officers that management is paying attention to their situation. It also gives the officers what they desire: recognition. This recognition not only helps keep

the officers working with a positive attitude, but it will also increase productivity as management can channel this energy in any way that they deem proper.

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