

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

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**Leadership Command Training:  
An Emergent Issue in Law Enforcement**

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

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## **ABSTRACT**

The main topic of this research paper is regarding an emerging issue in today's law enforcement command staff, the necessity for leadership command training. Promoting qualified command staff is a growing problem for law enforcement in America today. Due to the evolution of today's law enforcement as well as the demands expected by communities, agencies cannot be reactive to developing its command staff. The valuable skills obtained by leaders that attend leadership command training is reciprocated down to staff and benefit the agency overall in several ways. Agency perception and retention are a couple of benefits that are improved by developed leaders. Author W.D. Orrick (2008) stated in his book, "Employees don't leave jobs, they leave poor managers" (p.159); therefore, law enforcement agencies should mandate leadership training to all command staff.

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## INTRODUCTION

Police departments across the country are continually faced with high demands from their respective communities. Command staff leaders are often criticized due to their lack of effort in addressing issues or in the perception of the public not addressing the issue accordingly. Often leaders are acting according to their training or lack thereof when making decisions. Furthermore, leaders are counted on from within their respective staff.

Additionally in today's evolving world, leadership skills are crucial for law enforcement command staff. One of the most important challenges for police organizations is the development of leadership skills of their staff. Police departments cannot be reactive in training those that represent the members of their department. The training must be directed and applicable to all command staff regardless of their experience, tenure, and department size. The ability to develop the leadership abilities of staff will be the pivotal point for determining an agencies' success.

According to Day (2000), "in the case of leader development, the emphasis typically is on individual-based knowledge, skills, and abilities associated with formal leadership roles" (Day, 2000, para.8.). Currently, the only mandate upon being promoted to a supervisory position within in the state of Texas is completion of a basic new supervisor's course that must be completed within twelve months of assignment (TCOLE, n.d.a). The only exception to this requirement is the position of chief and constable. Texas police chiefs are mandated to attend a minimum 80 hour training course within 24 months of initial assignment. Additionally, they are required to attend 40 hours of continuous education every 24 month period thereafter. Constables are also

required to attend a minimum 40 hour training course followed by 40 hours of continuous education every 24 month period thereafter as well (TCOLE, n.d.b). Law enforcement agencies that fail to initiate a strong leadership development program will have limited success in retaining their best staff.

The importance of receiving new knowledge, skills, and abilities are essential elements of every member of a police department; however, these attributes cannot be disseminated if command level staff are not entertaining the idea of attaining new information. Furthermore, the advantages that are associated with receiving new and innovative training far exceeds command staff that choose to remain stagnant. To address this need, law enforcement agencies should mandate leadership training to all command staff.

## **POSITION**

Police officers account for only one facet of government, arguably the most visible agent, and can definitely be a change agent in the perception of the public. Policing is also one of the remaining occupations in which sworn leaders enter as recruits and promote through the ranks. Countless skills and unsurmountable knowledge is obtained by command staff members that attend some type of post-academy leadership training. For example, the Bill Blackwood Law Enforcement Management Institute of Texas (LEMIT) offers programs directed at command staff leadership such as various Texas Police Chief Leadership series and the Leadership Command College (LCC) (LEMIT, n.d.b). Each program consists of several topics, but all are directed at creating a more innovative and positive leadership role within an individual.

Subjects taught in LCC for example are team building, identifying what a manager is, strategic management and planning, budgeting and fiscal reporting, and media relations (LEMIT, n.d.a). Furthermore, team building educates leaders on key functions such as planning, organizing, leading, and controlling. The planning phase sets the foundation for goals that are being sought. Organizing pertains to time management and prioritizing time accordingly. Leading is the manner in which communication occurs within the organization, preferably openly and honestly. All four of the functions are indispensable for effective leaders.

Leadership vision is another essential subject taught in leadership training. Leadership vision is focusing attention on what matters most; what needs to be accomplished, and also assists in developing leadership style (Friedman, 2008). A useful vision has to be developed to address the future and deal with today's realities. The vision represents who the leader is and what they stand for. The vision shall inspire the leader and the people whose commitment they need, in order to achieve a common goal. In the book, *The 8<sup>th</sup> Habit* authored by Dr. Stephen Covey (2004), he stated in review of the Harris Interactive study, only 37% of employees said they had a clear understanding of what their organization was trying to achieve and why. Furthermore, only 1 in 5 was enthusiastic about their team's and organization's goals. Also, only 1 in 5 workers said they had a clear "line of sight between their tasks and their team's and organization's goals" (p.2).

Another reason why training should be mandated is due to the overwhelming amount of advantages that are developed during the process. Training builds better leaders through self-improvement, self-motivation, and self-confidence. It is not what

leaders' do that is important, but rather why and how they do it. Research findings indicate that leadership training is effective in improving reactions, learning, transfer, and results (Lacerenza, Reyes, Marlow, Joseph, & Salas, 2017). As public officials sworn to protect and serve the public in their respective communities, it is vital that law enforcement departments utilize due diligence in every aspect when dealing with the public. Law enforcement officers are typically the first opportunity the general public interacts with a government official. The interaction as previously mentioned can have a lasting impression because of the manner in which they responded resulting in less complaints, missed opportunities, and division.

Agencies that expose their communities to community policing can reap copious benefits. Educated upper echelon of a police department that expose professional and exceptional behavior down to their staff allows for similar behavior to be reciprocated toward the community and in turn building reputable relationships within the community. Maintaining a positive relationship and engaging the community is key to having a successful relationship. Author Tom Wetzel (2012), stated community policing if embraced can create trust and create symbiotic relationships. Wetzel further stated, "Preventing and solving crime is a team effort and true success comes when working together" (para.5).

Educating command staff on leadership also improves the overall effectiveness and efficiency of the department. One method is through employee engagement. Employees that are actively engaged in any process of the department develop a sense of belonging and a contributor to the success of the department. Employees also have an increase in production and an overall increase in morale. The temperament in office

also is less stressful due to newly acquired motivations. “The goal of employee engagement is not employee engagement itself—it is a better-functioning organization.” (Axelrod, 2010, para. 12)

Command staff who are willing to attend various trainings for self-improvement and more importantly to benefit the agency are generally regarded as loyal employees. According to Richard Axelrod (2010), this type of engagement is defined as a “psychological state in which employees feel a vested interest in the company’s success and are both willing and motivated to perform to levels that exceed the stated job requirements” (p. 31). This type of initiative and self-discipline is what law enforcement agencies are seeking from employees. Often officers are not challenged enough to exemplify their abilities or appreciated for similar regard resulting in them leaving the department in search of another department to freely apply those abilities. Officers want to have a sense of necessity and belonging.

Furthermore, retention rates tend to be a reoccurring concern among law enforcement agencies across the nation. Command staff that attend formal command staff training are apt to develop various strategies to retain personnel. Retention rates decrease as officers realize they are not being utilized to their full capabilities, often leading them to seek employment elsewhere. Every leader should focus on retaining officers that are loyal to the agency simply because the agency has already utilized resources building the officer into their current capacity. An agency that focuses on the future of officers will maximize the retention of officers because they know the agency has their best interest resulting in long term potential. In summary, as each decade passes and because of the complexity of policing increases, as well as the many



aspects of it, the more training and more education an officer has, the better they are prepared to deal with matters.

## **COUNTER ARGUMENTS**

According to the American Society of Training and Development, United States businesses spent \$1,273 per employee in 2016 on leadership based curriculum (Association for Talent Development, 2017). Research indicated despite the number of organizations devoted to leadership training, organizations are still reporting a lack of leadership skills among their employees. Only 13% of organizations believe they have done a quality job training their people (Lacerenza, et al., 2017). Additionally, some have pointed out a leadership deficit and have noted that organizations are not equipping the leaders with the necessary skills and capabilities they need to succeed. The problem associated with the training is the manner in which they are taught. The majority of leaders are trained opposed to developed. It is said training is the number one reason leadership development fails. Myatt (2012) wrote in an article, the problem with training is it adopts the need for indoctrination on systems, processes, and techniques. Training tends to place everyone in a box so to speak instead of educating them to think outside the box, beyond the training. Often training is one directional, one dimensional, one size fits all. The majority of training takes place within a presentation and or lecture rather than a dialog.

Additionally, some of the traits listed for an ineffective leader are lack of trust, questionable integrity, disregard for other's opinions, and ignore problems. Leaders who are not trusted will more than likely lack followers. The level of trust that a leader builds is paramount to their success. Leaders who operate with questionable integrity will also

lose followers because they are not capable of doing what they say they are going to do. Leaders that disregard input from subordinates also operate as lone wolves, making decisions as they see fit which is taken negatively.

The solution to effective leadership training occurs when administered correctly. It is more important to develop rather than train. Leaders need to be coached and mentored. Training employees generally occurs by showing them a set standard and on the contrary development occurs by thinking outside the box. Development occurs when employees are given the tools to do the job, but the opportunity and encouragement to expand beyond the standard. As mentioned earlier, a program such as the LCC can be beneficial in developing leaders as it is performed in a combined manner or lecture to educate as well as a dialog and networking to create a more realistic working knowledge base. Additionally, it has been said there is benefit in having off-site training away from day-to-day job demands with the ability to tie in real on-the-job projects that have a business impact and improve learning (Gurdjian, Halbeisen, & Lane, 2014).

Occasionally, great leadership can require employees to devote more time and energy to their organization in an effort to yield an exceptional performance. The issue then becomes how to evaluate the effectiveness (Kang, & Jin, 2015). Since leadership is vital to managing an organization, there will always be a need to evaluate the effectiveness of leadership imposed on subordinates. The problem with evaluating the effectiveness is that there is no concrete way to complete the evaluation. In addition, most evaluations are not based on standards; therefore, undefined or poorly defined. In the event that evaluations are assessed from participants a danger that may arise

occurs when the trainer then begins to tailor the program to please the participant opposed to continue making it challenging.

One approach to assess the effectiveness of the leader and the training they received is by conducting a 360 degree evaluation. The best way to gauge the progress is to conduct the evaluation prior to the program and then following the program approximately six to twelve months after attending the program. The 360 degree evaluation is performed by the leader first taking the assessment evaluating themselves, followed by them being assessed by peers, subordinates, and superiors. At the completion of the surveys, the leader will be able to determine the differences and begin to work on any necessary changes (Orrick, 2008).

Another approach would be to monitor the participant's career development after the training. The plan should articulate the leader's needs to reach a specified goal. The plan will also be very specific in detailing the responsibilities of the supervisor, department, and officer each have in achieving the agreed upon goals. Additionally, gauging the organization's impact is another way to monitor the effectiveness of the training. Consistent leadership can increase productivity and has been found to increase following the attendance of a leadership program.

## **RECOMMENDATION**

In today's law enforcement society, command staff are not taught leadership skills and then promoted; rather supervisors are promoted on their ability to get their current job completed in a successful and skillful manner. Some leaders that are promoted based on their skill set often are not the best leaders because they lack leadership abilities. Once promoted, leaders are then evaluated regarding the manner in

which they lead the organization or staff and the success they are able to contribute to the organization. In an article written by Andrew Hawkes (2011) he stated, "In today's modern law enforcement world, police training is as important as doctors attending medical school or lawyers passing the bar exam" (para. 1). One of the greatest potential crises for law enforcement agencies is a failure to develop leadership abilities in its command staff or better yet department; therefore, the state of Texas should mandate leadership training to all law enforcement command staff.

Law enforcement is not just about laws and policies. It is about the community; victims, civilians, officers, and even criminals. It is undeniable that law enforcement is a unique working environment and one in which the word positive is not always easily associated. So, bringing the word positive more frequently into law enforcement is a necessity because policing is about people.

Leadership comes in many different styles and when it comes to developing one's own style of leadership, it is most common to emulate leaders that had a significant and direct influence either personally or professionally. The traits that are not quite defined or understood of a leader are introduced at length in command leadership development and discussed to educate each leader. Some of the content leaders are exposed to consist of leadership styles and their traits such as trust, engagement, purpose, and competence. Additionally, decision making styles are also introduced to leaders because they do effect how a leader tends to make their decisions. There are several skills, traits, and theories presented in the development training.

Leadership development is an important function of management which helps to maximize efficiency and to achieve organizational goals. Author Orrick (2008) stated in

his book, "Employees don't leave jobs, they leave poor managers" (p.159). There are many advantages of attending a leadership program because of the many advantages it offers the department. Leaders after attending a program learn to initiate action, motivate employees, provide guidance, and build morale which builds a more positive work environment, just to name a few.

Opponents of leadership training might suggest the training is not as effective as they would anticipate and are still experiencing a deficit in leadership skills. Additionally, opponents tend to say leadership development programs tend to place all leaders in a "box" and teach a one type fits all. The manner in which the training is conducted is another issue that makes the training ineffective. Traditionally, training is provided in a classroom with a lecture presentation.

The solution to the training issue is to develop the leader by providing an environment in which the leader can learn. The atmosphere should be away from the office and conducted in both lecture and practical exercises that enables the leaders to utilize critical thinking to solve the problem. The training is presented as an additional tool for the leader to utilize during their tenure opposed to this is the way it has to be conducted mentality.

Opponents also suggest there is no way to measure a leader's success. Opponents state the methods utilized to measure the abilities are undefined or poorly defined making the evaluation ineffective. However, the leader's success can be measured by the profound effect it may have on an agency's morale, core values, as well as the future inspiration of officers.

In summary, there is a necessity for law enforcement agencies to invest in its leadership staff because it is detrimental to the future of the department and shall be mandated. New leaders must continue to expand their knowledge to continually cultivate new innovative ideas to provide solutions to the various issues that arise within law enforcement. Leadership development has proven to be evolutionary over the last century and will continue to progress, again; therefore, the necessity for mandated leadership training.

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