

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

**Officer Performance Evaluations as a Measurement of Achieving
Departments' Mission Statements**

**An Administrative Research Paper
Submitted in Partial Fulfillment
Required for Graduation from the
Leadership Command College**

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May 2007**

ABSTRACT

The correlation between a department's mission statement and employee performance evaluations is relevant to contemporary law enforcement because mission statements are increasingly utilized by police agencies as an instrument to determine whether employees are achieving the stated mission. Mission statements are a reflection of a department's guiding philosophy and are intended to provide direction for the organization. Performance evaluations are tools used by agencies to determine whether employees are meeting measures of job performance, such as initiative and quality of work. These evaluations should also be used to determine whether or not employees are achieving the stated mission of the department.

The purpose of this research is to determine if departments that utilize performance evaluations also measure the extent to which employees are achieving the department's stated mission. If no correlation exists, this research is intended to recommend that such a measure be included.

The method of inquiry used by the researcher included: a review of articles, textbooks, periodicals and a survey distributed to twenty-three survey participants. The researcher discovered that thirteen participants reported having a performance evaluation instrument that included categories that determined the officer's furtherance of the department's mission statement. It was also learned that all but one responded believed that such a criteria should be included in regular employee performance evaluations.

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INTRODUCTION

The issue to be examined considers whether or not employee performance evaluations accurately measure the degree to which employees are achieving a department's stated mission.

The relevance of identifying if such a correlation exists to law enforcement is that the community has expectations for police officers' job performance. A department's mission statement is often readily accessible by the public and therefore creates the expectation that officers meet the stated mission. Officers not meeting expectations based on the mission statement could create an environment of mistrust and a perception that a department is apathetic to the needs of the community.

The purpose of this research is first to determine whether or not a selection of departments has a published mission statement. Next, those departments with mission statements will have their performance evaluation instrument reviewed to determine the degree to which employees achieve the stated mission is measured.

The research question to be examined focuses on whether or not departments should create a performance evaluation that effectively measures officers' efforts to achieve the department's mission statement in the daily performance of their duties.

The intended method of inquiry includes: a review of articles, textbooks, periodicals and a survey distributed to agencies of varying size.

The anticipated findings of the research is that while departments identify their guiding philosophy with a mission statement, no measure of employee performance exists that determines whether officers are achieving the stated mission in the performance of their duties.

The field of law enforcement will be influenced by the conclusions because the disparity between mission statements and performance evaluations will identify the need for agencies to begin rating officers' efforts at achieving the stated mission. Having a mission statement as the guiding philosophy of a department creates an expectation in the public that the department meet their mission. Therefore, regular performance evaluations should have a measure to determine the extent to which officers are achieving the mission of the department.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

To better understand the significance of the mission statement-performance evaluation relationship, each term must first be defined. These definitions will serve as the basis for comparison later.

Personal and organizational mission statements have been in use in the private sector for many years. Stephen R. Covey (1989), a leader in management and leadership development, has explained that a personal mission statement "focuses on what you want to be (character) and to do (contributions and achievements) and on the values or principles upon which being and doing are based" (p. 106).

The qualities outlined above may also be used to define organizational mission statements, which Covey (1989) noted are vital to successful organizations (p. 139). The organizational mission statements that reflect the shared vision and values of everyone involved create great unity and tremendous commitment (Covey, 1989, p. 143).

Mission statements provide organizations and the public with clear values and principles. In the law enforcement context, "A Mission is what the department wishes to

accomplish in global terms” (Mulder, 2004, p. 102). A mission statement contains the organization’s reason for being and is the foundation for departmental decision-making. Further, a successful mission statement “must represent the philosophy of both administration and line personnel” (Bennett & Hess, 1996, p. 5).

Mission statements also influence conduct. In organizations that have members, not administration, create the mission statements those members become intimately connected to the principles and philosophy espoused by the mission statement. This connection encourages adherence to the philosophy, as members are stakeholders in the vision of the organization. Cordner, as quoted by Bennett & Hess (1996), concluded that “Control is achieved not through formal, written rules and regulations but by developing team spirit and a commitment to shared values” (p. 482).

The types of performance evaluations vary, as do the rating system used but all have a common purpose: they are used to measure employee performance on the job (Bennett & Hess, 1989, p. 680). Fyfe, Greene, Walsh, Wilson & McLaren (1997) observed that performance evaluations, whatever the type, usually have the following basic elements: a set of predefined evaluation criteria for each organizational position, a specific time period for monitoring and evaluating performance, a requirement that the rater record his or her assessment on a standardized form (p. 331).

Performance evaluations not only measure job performance, but they also serve to hold officers accountable for their actions. The employee performance evaluation is a useful tool in gauging this accountability. In a performance evaluation, “accountability” is demonstrating that conduct is consistent with a predetermined standard of performance (Fyfe, et al., 1997, p. 482).

The performance standards or rating criteria used on the typical performance evaluation should describe characteristics required by the job (Iannone & Iannone, 2001, p. 261). The typical performance evaluation consists of a standardized score sheet with rating categories consisting of subcategories related to duties. These subcategories may include personal characteristics, ability and performance as it relates to quality and quantity of work (Iannone & Iannone, 2001, p. 261). Mulder stated that performance reviews are one method used to show measurable results in performance of sworn personnel (2004, p. 103).

Another important factor to be considered in performance evaluations but often overlooked is the employee's adherence to the agency's mission statement. The mission statement is a declaration of the organization's purpose and identification of values it holds dear. The employee's furthering of the mission should be included in the performance evaluation.

Grote observed that in the past "...the performance appraisal system was rarely linked directly to the stated mission of the organization or to an other programs and processes designed to maximize human efforts and intellectual capital" (2000, pg. 2)

Mulder (2000) also noted that in doing performance evaluations, supervisors are asked to rate individual's meeting generic skills and behaviors, and adds that the relationship to the accomplishment of the agency's mission are not considered. (p. 102)

The hard data used in traditional performance evaluations may not truly reflect those subject duties that officers are expected to perform. According to Fyfe, et al. (1997), "The manner in which employees accomplish their duties must also be

considered. This will ensure that the employee's total work effort, rather than just his or her statistical output, is subject to the rater's assessment" (p. 333).

Under traditional performance evaluations, an officer who performed activities, such as service to the public that generated no statistical data would find that the activity was not considered in his performance evaluation even if the service preformed furthered a department's stated mission. In fact, the public service activities take an officer away from duties that could generate statistical data. Therefore the number of reports taken or calls for service answered, looked for in performance evaluations, would consequently be scored lower. On paper the officer would then appear to be ineffective when in actuality he is following the department's mission statement.

Conversely, Mulder argued that an above-standards performance evaluation that does not take into account the department's stated mission of reducing crime and improving the quality of life does no good for the well being of the community (Mulder, 2004, p. 102).

Evaluations should not be based solely on statistical data. Measuring the effectiveness of the police organization goes beyond the hard data of crime clearance rates, number of arrests or citations issued. An agency's productivity measurement has evolved to include more subjective criteria, such as confidence in the police and satisfaction with police action (Fyfe, et al., 1997, p. 379).

In recent years, there has been a shift in departmental thinking. In a sample group of public and private organizations, Grote found that items on the performance appraisal were linked to the agencies' strategic plan in an effort to bring together

organizational and individual goals (Grote, 2000, pg. 2). The resulting performance evaluation created a more accurate representation of an officer's productivity.

Grote observed that performance appraisals included "core competencies" that define those behaviors, skills, attributes, performance factors and proficiencies the members of the organization should possess (Grote, 2000, p. 4). Often, such core competencies as honesty, integrity and fair dealing are included as part of a department's mission statement.

METHODOLOGY

The research question to be examined considers whether or not departments that utilize performance evaluations also measure the extent to which employees are achieving the department's stated mission.

The researcher hypothesizes that departments with mission statements will not have a quantifiable method of linking performance evaluations to the mission statement. It is further theorized that the majority of departments surveyed will focus their officer performance evaluations on hard data that indicates an officer's productivity rather than subjective or community service-related characteristics such as initiative or problem solving activities.

The method of inquiry will include a review of articles, textbooks, periodicals and a survey distributed to 40 agencies of varying size.

The instrument that will be used to measure the researcher's findings regarding the performance evaluation/mission statement relationship will be a survey. This survey will be used to determine first whether or not participating agencies have a mission statement then to what extent an officer's performance evaluation measures his

accomplishing that mission. The size of the survey will consist of 20 questions, distributed to 40 survey participants from agencies of varying sizes from across the State of Texas.

The response rate to the survey instrument resulted in only 23 of 40 surveyed departments responding. The information obtained from the survey will be analyzed by identifying agencies with mission statements, then reviewing those survey questions relating to the performance evaluation for those agencies.

FINDINGS

Surveys were sent to 40 departments chosen at random. Major metropolitan departments such as Dallas and Houston were not included in the survey. This research excluded the larger metropolitan agencies with the belief that smaller agencies would have a more centralized administration and more likely to have a personal vested interest in the community they serve. Twenty-three surveys were returned with a variety of responses.

The survey instrument first identified participants by the size of officers and then by the size of population served. The following chart, Figure 1, identifies the relationship between size of population and number of officers.

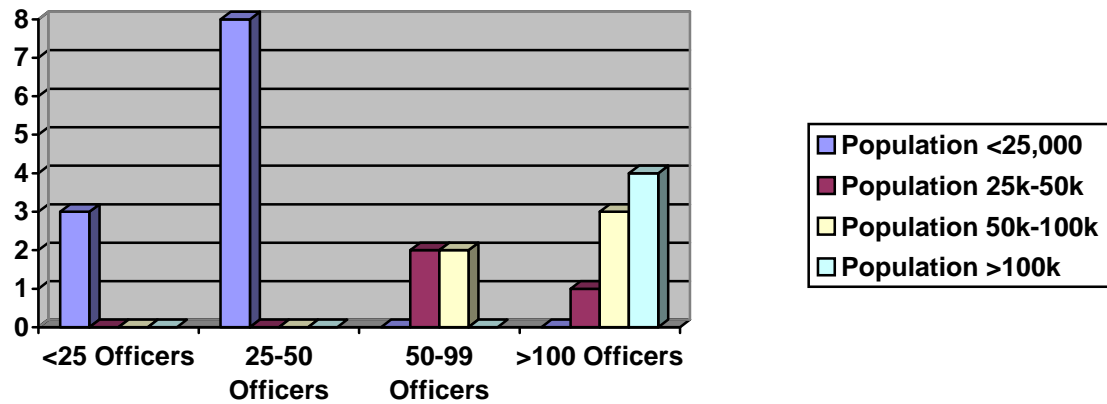


Figure 1 Agency size related to population served

All responding agencies but one reported having a mission or vision statement. The following chart identifies the number of agencies that reported having a category to measure officers achieving the department's stated mission on performance evaluations. This chart clearly shows the disparity between departments with correlating mission statements and performance evaluations and those without based on the size of the agency.

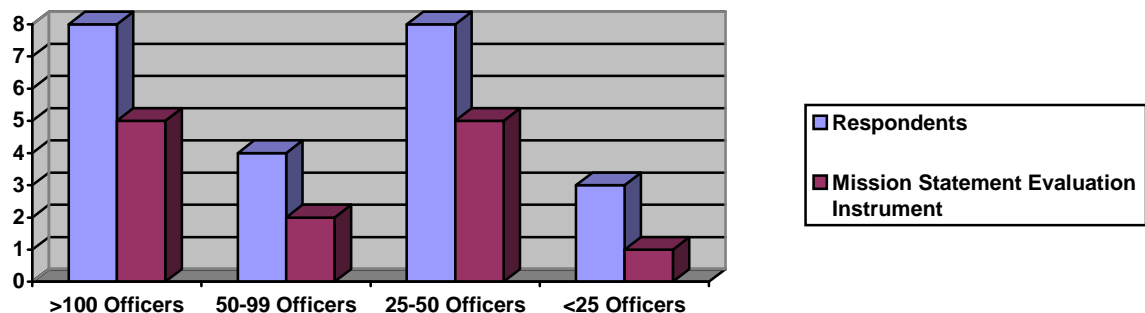


Figure 2 Agencies with a mission statement rating on evaluations

Of the twenty-three responding agencies, only 13 identified criteria on their performance evaluation that corresponded to their mission statement. In addition to determining whether or not responding agencies had a mission statement, the survey instrument also inquired into an agency's performance evaluation process. The frequency of evaluations, consequences of positive or negative evaluations and incentives were some of the questions included.

Frequency of evaluations varied, with a range given from monthly to annually. Eleven respondents reported giving annual evaluations, nine bi-annually, two bi-monthly, one monthly and two agencies reported that they never give performance evaluations. Several agencies reported multiple evaluations occurring at different times during the year.

Multiple responses were also received regarding the consequences for a negative evaluation. Fifteen reported counseling their officers, thirteen offer training, five issue written reprimands, three had no consequences and 12 reported alternative discipline in the form of professional development programs aimed at increasing job performance.

Incentives for a positive performance evaluation included an increase in pay for ten agencies and three offered other types of incentives. Ten of the twenty-three agencies reported having no incentives for positive performance.

To consider current opinions, one question on the survey specifically asked if surveyed departments believed that performance evaluations should include a method for gauging officer's furthering of the department's mission statement. Surprisingly, all

but one responded that such a rating category should be included in the performance evaluation.

DISCUSSION/CONCLUSIONS

The problem or issue examined by the researcher considered whether or not employee performance evaluations accurately measured the degree to which employees were achieving a department's stated mission.

The purpose of this research was to first to determine whether or not a selection of departments had a published mission statement. Next, those departments with mission statements had their performance evaluation instrument reviewed to determine the degree to which employees achieve the stated mission is measured.

The research question that was examined focused on whether or not departments should create a performance evaluation that effectively measures officers' efforts to achieve the department's mission statement in the daily performance of their duties.

The researcher hypothesized that while departments identify their guiding philosophy with a mission statement, no measure of employee performance existed that determined whether officers are achieving the stated mission in the performance of their duties.

The researcher concluded from the findings that more than half of responding agencies reported having a measure of officers' achieving the department's mission statement included in the performance evaluation document. Further, all but one respondent agreed that some method of rating an officer's furtherance of the mission statement should be included in the regular performance evaluation.

The findings of the research did not support the hypothesis. The reason why the findings did not support the hypothesis is probably due to a paradigm shift in policing. Progressive civilian leadership practices have in recent years entered into the culture of policing and changed departments for the better. The focusing of an organization's long-term goals in a mission statement is one of these practices.

This shift in organizational practice apparently led to the inclusion of a rating category to determine the furtherance of a department's mission statement to be included in the performance evaluation. As evaluations are typically done at regular intervals, such an inclusion was a natural extension of the performance appraisal process.

Limitations that might have hindered this study resulted because of an unclear definition of attributes specifically important to the further of a department's stated mission. Most department mission statements include "protection of life and property," however attributes that further that aspect of the mission could just as easily be included in standard statistical officer productivity data. Harder to identify are those qualities that project professionalism and customer service.

The study of the correlation between a department's mission statement and employee performance evaluations is relevant to contemporary law enforcement because as mission statements are increasingly utilized by police agencies an instrument to determine whether employees are achieving the stated mission must exist.

Law enforcement agencies stand to be benefited by the results of this research by understanding that as progressive civilian leadership and management practices

become used in the law enforcement environment, some measure of their effectiveness must be created. This measure in the form of regular performance evaluations should be done on those employees whose job it is to further the department's mission, namely the rank and file officers. Positive ratings of subjective core competencies, such as honesty, integrity and community service will prove to management and the community served that the officers are achieving the department's stated mission.

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