

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

---

---

**In Search of Leadership**

---

---

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

---

---

**By  
Terry T. Dunn**

**Katy Police Department  
Katy Texas  
May 2015**

## **ABSTRACT**

Leadership can be found in any progressive law enforcement agency. The ability to recognize and harness that leadership may be the difference between success and failure. Asking ten different people what the definition of leadership is will get ten different answers. The problem in recognition is often the confusion between leadership and management.

The position of the researcher is the recognition of prospective leadership in the workplace, focusing on encouraging and training those individuals to be future leaders in the organization. The loss of leadership in small organizations can be catastrophic when there is no qualified leader to fill the vacancy. Often, experienced managers fill the vacancy, promoting loyal or long time employees with little or no leadership ability, leading to stagnation in the organization. Good leadership must be a consideration for future growth and progress in any organization.

City management should recognize a lack of leadership in smaller police departments. Employees displaying favorable leadership traits should be recruited and trained as current or future leaders. Continuing to explore for capable prospects of leadership will enhance the selection process of subsequent supervisors. Proper training and experience will produce trust and respect from team members.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
Abstract	
Introduction . . . . .	.1
Position . . . . .	2
Counter Position . . . . .	5
Recommendation . . . . .	8
References . . . . .	11

## INTRODUCTION

The idea that good leadership is essential at every level of operation in a successful organization is debatable. Some agencies believe that leadership should be exclusively at the upper management level, while other agencies tend to believe that leadership should be taken advantage of, regardless of what level of the organization it is found. To be considered a leader, followers must have trust and credibility. Leaders must earn the trust of the people they work with. Trust is something that cannot be demanded or required. Trust is earned. Team members have to know that their best interest is in mind when decisions are made. Credibility is gained by the knowledge and experience used to solve problems in the past (Schimmer, 2012).

Without a doubt, there have been numerous great leaders in history. The ability of those leaders to recognize and employ the leadership of subordinates leads to various outcomes. The first President of the United States of America, George Washington, displayed leadership abilities that created vision enduring to this day. Another leader was credited with deriving one of the most economic societies and effective military forces in history, combined with his brilliant strategy and planning was described as an extraordinary leader. However, Adolf Hitler was abominated throughout the world (Alain, 2012). The argument in consideration is that the leadership found at all levels of employment should be recruited, encouraged and developed into employees who display pride, loyalty and confidence in the organizational goals. Thus, setting examples for the new hire, up to and including the Chief Executive Officer, are based on the goals and vision of the entire organization. The following research relates the need for an efficient law enforcement agency to search for and take advantage of

leadership skills, regardless of where they are displayed. Law enforcement agencies should continuously pursue positive practices of leadership in their respective agencies to encourage a high level of respect and trust among fellow officers and the community they serve.

## **POSITION**

Police officers make numerous decisions in a normal work day. Some of those decisions are based on personal knowledge. Other decisions are commonly put out for review, either by peers or supervisors, for opinions, ideas or recommendations. In the absence of a supervisor, the peers that generally receive the inquiries are experienced officers, having been with the department for several years. The experience and knowledge of these senior officers are extremely valuable to the department. The department that recognizes and develops this experience and knowledge into strong leadership ability will reap the benefits for many years.

Most organizations have both formal and informal structures. Formal structure starts at the top and flows down through the chain of command and other various departments to the patrol officer. The informal structure is often not officially recognized. However, good leaders will know the informal structure and the ability of these prospective leaders. This informal structure is typically made up of hard workers who have been with the agency for a long time and are loyal to the department. Some of the decisions made concerning day to day issues are handled through the chain of command. However, many times decisions get stalled, for one reason or another and the decision is made through the informal structure. The fact that the decision was made and something was accomplished is the main factor. The consideration that

proper procedure was not followed in making the decision should be secondary (Jurkanin, Hoover, Dowling, & Ahmad, 2001).

Police officers work a variety of shifts, depending on numerous factors. Some agencies work eight hour shifts, while others consider 10- or 12-hour shifts more appropriate for their needs. Regardless of the number of hours worked per shift, there commonly seems to be one or more officers who arrive at work at least 30 minutes prior to the start of their shift. On many occasions the same officers, who arrive early, also stay beyond the end of their shift, helping other officers with late reports or paperwork. Departmental leadership should recognize this behavior as the leadership trait of leading by example, and develop confidence in the officer to display further leadership ability.

Arrival time and departure time from work indicate one basic leadership skill of leading by example. However, flexibility in this area can lead to further leadership ability by displaying the fact that, on occasion, officers have personal concerns that need their attention. Officers who have children will occasionally need to leave early or come in late for school functions, illness or medical appointments (Storlie, n.d.). Planning around these situations, when they occur, indicate that the supervisor cares for the well being of the officer in his personal life. Care must be used so that personnel are deterred from abusing this flexibility. However, benefits gained by this courtesy are strictly positive.

One of the key elements of a great leader is the ability to influence. People are influenced in different ways. The simple act of listening has the ability to influence. Most people believe that a great leader should have great things to say. However, to sit

down and listen to various problems, ideas, complaints or opinions, lets the person feel like they are a valuable part of the team. This is especially the case when a problem is solved or an idea is built upon. Gratitude can be influential. Some people work hard and are very productive, under the assumption that management is thankful for their hard work. For the supervisor to actually tell the employee “thank you” or state that their hard work is appreciated will gain influence. Consistency, in the way policies are enforced, the way work is completed or communication implemented can lead employees to know what to expect. Even when change takes place, the employees have a general idea of where that change will lead and can plan accordingly. On the other hand, a lack of consistency will lead employees to meet change with disorganization and fear of the unknown (Milburn, n.d.).

The ability to influence people does not make a leader. However, it is a key element to recognize in the search for prospective leaders. To recognize and develop these prospective leaders, who already have a basic knowledge of where the organization is going and how they are going to get there, will ensure their success as future leaders as well as the success of the organization.

With leadership comes responsibility and accountability, both delicate subjects for many leaders. Some leaders believe these traits to be synonymous. It is not uncommon to find experienced leaders and managers who are still unclear as to the difference between responsibility and accountability. Leaders often delegate responsibility for the completion of different tasks, in order to accomplish a set goal. When one or more of these different tasks are not completed, the goal may not be achieved. When honest mistakes from team members or coworkers cause failure or

even extreme monetary loss, someone must be held accountable. This is where true leaders, as well as poor leaders, will characterize themselves. This might mean a slight loss of revenue, or a complete company failure. Good leadership will accept accountability for the entire loss or failure, regardless of who failed in their assigned responsibility (Rierson, 2012).

## **COUNTER POSITION**

Law enforcement agencies who lack the insight to pursue leadership in every available arena risk the loss of potential leaders by having them subjected to controversial management styles. Some law enforcement agencies employ supervisors with inadequate leadership skills. Through lack of understanding or training, these individuals find that the quickest way for them to gain compliance is to rely on the power of their position, sometimes referred to as formal power. Most organizations give this power to their supervisors to assist them in performing their jobs effectively. Reward power is sometimes used to reward behavior deemed appropriate. This power often includes promotions, better work schedules and even better pay. Coercive power, the opposite of reward power, often punishes employees by preventing employees from receiving expected rewards. Using power to reward or punish an employee is an extreme motivational tool and consideration should be used in either case (Stimson, 2011).

Elements of leadership are often misunderstood or completely overlooked. Most leaders will agree that leadership is not normally associated with the term surrender. However, properly employed, this controversial leadership style is able to strengthen any leader's ability. Control employs power, limits potential and restricts initiative.

Surrender can be described as the fine art of letting go, but not giving in or giving up. Surrender encourages cooperation and innovation. Whereas control creates backups, indicates a lack of confidence and leads to distrust. The art of surrender incorporates the mindset of giving credit, listening instead of speaking and having an open mind rather than a closed mind. To surrender to ego or the wrong priorities would indicate leadership weakness. However, surrendering the belief that supervisors are always right, in order to accomplish more for others, would not indicate a leadership weakness, but more of a leadership confidence (Myatt, 2012).

Gary Linderer served his Country in 1969 Vietnam with the United States Army, 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne Division, special operations duty with F Company, 58<sup>th</sup> Infantry (Long Range Patrol). In his book titled *Eyes Behind the Lines* (1991), Linderer stated “I felt that most leaders were motivated more by fear of failure than by gain and glory” (Linderer, 1991, p.74). Fear of leading is not uncommon in law enforcement. History has a long list of leaders that have failed. Previous failures lead some to the belief that failure is imminent. Presidents, generals and CEO's are often presented as premier leaders of military or industry, leading some to the presumption that a simple police officer is not meant to be a leader.

To have previously failed means simply that an attempt to try has been applied. Believing that someone is born a leader is a fallacy. No different than the credence that professional athletes are born to be athletes or that pilots are born to fly aircraft. On the other hand, every person is born with abilities that can be recognized, coached and trained into achievement (McLaughlin, 2012). In his book about the Vietnam War *Eyes Behind The Lines* (1991), Gary Linderer's combat experience led him to the brilliant

rationalization that “Recognition and achievement should always be a result of leadership ability and not the reason for it” (Linderer, 1991, p.74). The police agency that observes the individual attempt to try, showing the ability and desire to learn, should encourage the development and training necessary to establish the basic leadership traits. Thus, allowing current leaders to forge and develop those traits into the future leadership of the department.

Many people misunderstand the difference between management and leadership. Some believe that the highest ranking person in an organization must be the leader, with the descending levels of administration representing upper and lower management, leaving the specialists and workers to make up the remainder. These misconceptions are often combined with the idea that leadership is measured in terms of personality characteristics or charisma.

Management organizes the difficult tasks of planning, budgeting, staffing and solving problems to create the products or services provided on time and on budget. This task is extremely difficult and complex, commonly underestimated and crucial to success. Efficient organizations need expert management, it is that simple. However, management is not leadership.

Leadership is foresight with imagination. Actions speak louder than words or characteristics. Locating opportunities and taking advantage of those opportunities, will allow the organization to change productively and move forward. Having and sharing a vision for the future of the organization is one admirable element. According to Kotter (2013), “The notion that a few extraordinary people at the top can provide all the

leadership needed today is ridiculous, and it's a recipe for disaster" (para. 9). The exploration for leadership cannot be restricted to upper management (Kotter, 2013).

There are many people who are eager to be leaders. Some people are simply not willing to accept the responsibility or accountability. It is extremely stressful to accept the fault of others, and even harder to stand accountable for those faults, especially if those faults are not justifiable. The results may be loss of title, loss of job, or in the worse case scenario, loss of life. For those who find it easier, when confronted with team member failure, to "throw them to the wolves", leadership will always be elusive. For the special few who have the courage to accept accountability for the honest mistakes of their team members, regardless of the consequences, congratulations. Those few will be rewarded with the loyalty, respect, and dedication of team members (Rierson, 2012). Welcome to leadership.

## **RECOMMENDATION**

The future of law enforcement leadership should not be a legacy to be handed down to whoever is next in the chain of command. Ideally, the next person in the chain of command is worthy of such a legacy. However, some agencies have top managers who have been with the department for many years, starting at the bottom and working their way up. This certainly displays loyalty to the department. However, this loyalty is often mistaken for leadership, especially when leadership has been absent for long periods of time. Combined with the fact that this individual has had an excellent work ethic and displayed good decisions concerning management of the department, city administrators assume that the individual must be a good leader. This assumption can lead to a stagnant department, with no vision or goals. This ultimately creates the

simple ability to continue working the same old way, day after day, year after year. Boredom prevails and challenges disappear, eventually leading to a loss of personnel. The loss of those persons, some with the ability to become good leaders, then leads to the commitment of the department, in time and money, to seek, test, hire and train new personnel. Without ample leadership the cycle will repeat itself, constantly hiring and then losing personnel. Eventually, the organization will consist mostly of employees with little or no experience, destined to search for leadership in vain.

Police departments must recognize a lack in leadership, train the employees who display leadership traits, and continue to explore for future leaders, training them accordingly. This will not only ensure leadership, but will retain personnel who are seeking job challenges and searching for leaders to follow. The initial investment will be minimal compared to the benefits gained, immediately and in the future, by the department.

The characteristics of leadership are numerous. Schimmer (2012) advises trust and credibility of team members is crucial. Milburn (2010) believes that the ability to influence is the trait of a leader. Responsibility and accountability indicate leadership, states Rierson (2012). Storlie (n.d.) concluded that flexibility and dedication are essential. The proper use of power signifies good leadership, relates Stimson (2013). The idea that leadership is foresight combined with imagination creates an endless mixture of leadership traits. The research clearly infers that to simply possess one of these traits does not make a leader. The decision on which aspect of leadership is considered most important varies from leader to leader. The ability to care for the well-being of team mates or co-workers is an excellent base. Building from that base, other

traits will thrive. The resulting product will demonstrate leadership ability, complimenting any skill in any profession. Accomplishment in the field of leadership is a combination of exhilaration, inspiration, and passionate terror all wrapped up in the same package. When the package is opened, it is hard to determine what will tumble out first.

Investigation has shown that there are negative aspects of leadership. Those negative aspects are the misinterpretation of leadership and toxic leadership. These negative aspects have led to agency stagnation and even company failure. The simple solution to this widespread problem is knowledge and ability. Law enforcement managers should know the difference between good leadership and poor leadership. The same managers should strive to improve or replace poor leadership. Managers who hunt for and embrace potential future leaders will only gain from the benefits. Training current and future leaders must have top priority for the inevitable change that occurs in all successful organizations.

## REFERENCES

- Alain, P. (2012, April 15). Leadership and 10 great leaders from history. Retrieved from <http://www.industryleadersmagazine.com/leadership-and-10-great-leaders-from-history/>
- Jurkanin, T., Hoover, L., Dowling, J., & Ahmad, J. (Eds). (2001). *Enduring, surviving, and thriving as a law enforcement executive*. Springfield, IL: Charles C. Thomas.
- Kotter, J. (2013, January 9). Management is (still) not leadership. Retrieved from <http://blogs.hbr.org/2013/01/management-is-still-not-leadership/>
- Linderer, G. (1991). *Eyes behind the lines*. New York, NY: Ivy Books.
- McLaughlin, D. (2012, November 1) The top five reasons people fear being a leader – debunked. Retrieved from <http://linked2leadership.com/2012/11/01/top-five-reasons-people-fear-being-a-leader-debunked/>
- Milburn, T. (2010, November 22). 10 Strategies to grow in your influence with others. Retrieved from <http://timmilburn.com/10-strategies-to-grow-in-your-influence-with-others>
- Myatt, M. (2012, December 26). The most misunderstood aspect of great leadership. Retrieved from <http://www.forbes.com/sites/mikemyatt/2012/12/26/the-most-misunderstood-aspect-of-great-leadership/>
- Rierson, R. (2012, March 23). Accountability vs responsibility. Retrieved from <http://www.doseofleadership.com/accountability-vs-responsibility/>
- Schimmer, T. (2012, September 11). Don't be afraid to lead... Retrieved from <http://tomschimmer.com/2012/09/>

Stimson, T (2013, June 21). Sources of power. Retrieved from

<http://www.consultcli.com/Sourcespower.htm>

Storlie, C (n.d.). Not just for the military: Leadership by example. Retrieved from

<http://www.military.com/veteran-jobs/career-advice/on-the-job/leadership-by-example-in-workplace.html>