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WHEN THE PROBLEM EMPLOYEE IS A SUPERVISOR

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## WHEN THE PROBLEM EMPLOYEE IS A SUPERVISOR

### INTRODUCTION:

A problem employee is often the cause of much dissention within a police department, especially when the problem employee is a supervisor. The supervisor's position of authority and responsibility makes it that much more troublesome when something causes performance to suffer. The supervisor is susceptible to the same problems that can influence a regular employee. In other words, the position of authority does not immunize the supervisor against bad performance.

As an example in this paper, I have profiled an anonymous, but very real patrol sergeant in a likewise anonymous police department. Pseudonyms have been substituted for the name of the sergeant and the department. Examples of the sergeant's conduct have been given to emphasize the information supplied in the text of this research paper.

In almost all of the texts used for research material in this paper, it was found that the individual authors referred to the problem employee in a number of different ways. The terms used by the authors that have been referenced in this paper are problem employee, marginal performer, and unsatisfactory performer. These terms are not generally synonymous and interchangeable; but, for the purpose of this paper, each will be referring to the same thing, the problem employee.

## IDENTIFYING THE PROBLEM SUPERVISOR:

The marginal or unsatisfactory employee can best be defined as any employee who repeatedly fails to produce a reasonable quantity of acceptable work in line with individual capabilities and management expectations.<sup>1</sup> The problem supervisor can be defined as any supervisor who recurringly fails to produce a reasonable quantity of acceptable work or manage the production of a reasonable quantity of acceptable work in line with individual capabilities and management expectations. The obvious difference in the two definitions is the key word "manage". Not only is the supervisor responsible for his own work output but the work of others as well. This is an extremely important point when one is considering the total impact of a problem employee on an organization.

When supervisors become problem employees, they will possibly lapse into moodiness for extended periods of time, become disinterested in the department's work performance, appear overly aggressive with subordinates, or make too many assumptions.<sup>2</sup> The appearance of selfishness, suspicion, envy, failure to give credit, hypercriticism, and arbitrariness will usually denote weaknesses if not downright failure of an individual as a leader.<sup>3</sup> The symptoms

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<sup>1</sup> Steinmetz, Lawrence L., Managing the Marginal and Unsatisfactory Performer (Reading, Massachusetts: Addison-Wesley Publishing Company, Inc., 1985), P. 119.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., P. 120.

<sup>3</sup> Iannone, N. F., Supervision of Police Personnel (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice Hall, Inc., 1980) P. 18.

exhibited by the problem supervisor are almost identical to the negative symptoms exhibited by any other problem employee.

In most situations, the employees in a department are able to ignore the poor attitude displayed by a typical problem employee; however, it is not unusual for the members of a department to reflect the "mood" of the problem supervisor. Employees tend to focus on and even emulate the behavior of their supervisors.<sup>4</sup> If the supervisor is irritable, disinterested or otherwise preoccupied, the employees supervised will usually demonstrate the same traits in their work performance.

Depending on the level of the supervisor's performance, the overall performance of the supervisor's subordinates could be noticeably effected. The employees assigned to work for the problem supervisor will sometimes become upset over the lack of action or type of action taken by the supervisor.<sup>5</sup> In other words, if the supervisor is inconsistent in personal or professional demeanor, employees become easily frustrated and confused about what is acceptable. A subordinates performance reflects the attitude of the supervisor.

If group performance deteriorates, the supervisor's performance should be checked. If one or two individuals in a department seem to have a problem, it is probably a personal problem on the part of the employee. If all or most of the individuals within a department seem to have a problem, then the

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<sup>4</sup>Weaver, Jim. "Supervising the Veteran Officer" The Police Chief, February 1990, 49.

<sup>5</sup>Interview, Canyon, Texas Police Chief Bobby Griffin, Telephone Interview, December 13, 1991.

natural course of action would be to check on the performance of the supervisor.

The effective supervisor establishes a working environment that fosters motivation, while an ineffective supervisor can create an environment that kills subordinate motivation.<sup>6</sup> In other words, the performance of the supervisor can to a certain extent be monitored by the work performance and motivation of his/her employees. It can also be argued that the greater the scope of the problems exhibited by the supervisor to employees, the more the problems will be reflected in their work.

EXAMPLE: The patrol sergeant used in the example is a real person but will be referred to in this report as Sergeant Smith. Sergeant Smith has been a patrol sergeant with the City of Problemsville for the past eleven years. Well educated and very intelligent, Sergeant Smith has been a field training officer in the past and at one time was the team leader of the Problemsville Police Department's tactical team. Over the years, the sergeant has received numerous commendations and awards such as the Officer of the Year Award and Life Saving Award. Sergeant Smith's work had always been rated excellent until performance slipped.

The first indication of a decline in performance was a change in attitude. Sergeant Smith became very belligerent to subordinates and superiors alike and developed an autocratic style,

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<sup>6</sup> Robinette, Hillary M., Burnout in Blue-Managing the Police Marginal Performer (New York, New York: Praeger Publishers, 1987), P. 48.

unreceptive to feedback from the other supervisors within the department. Then, decisions became inconsistent and decision making errors appeared. Sergeant Smith's indecisiveness became a concern to fellow officers because of unpredictable behavior signaled by defensiveness and blame shifting when criticized. The sergeant refused to accept responsibility for decisions and the actions of subordinate officers. Any attempt by a superior officer to discuss this attitude would result in verbal confrontations and accusations. He eventually became paranoid.

Alienated from the other sergeants in the department, Sergeant Smith took on the informal role of departmental protector in the matters of disciplinary action. Telling the officers in the department that administration was out to get them, Sergeant Smith offered consolation and developed a following of subordinate officers by assuring them that they were right and the department was wrong in some of the disciplinary actions administered by the department. Because of the disinformation being disseminated by Sergeant Smith, a number of the quality officers within the department began to distrust the intentions of the departmental administrators. Administrative hearings became more intense and in some cases hostile as a result of the disinformation given to the officers under investigation. Most of Sergeant Smith's work was done "under the table" using secrecy to stay out of trouble with superiors. Viewed as an ally by some of the officers, Sergeant Smith became the ultimate protector. The rest of the officers in the department refused to report Sergeant Smith because they were afraid of retaliation through the filing of frivolous disciplinary actions against the officers in the form of letters of counselling.

Secrecy insulated Sergeant Smith from command officers.

UNDERSTANDING THE CAUSES OF THE PROBLEM SUPERVISOR:

As the supervisor is influenced by the same problems that affect all employees, it is important that the issues be reviewed and addressed in basically the same way. There are a number of reasons an individual can be categorized as a problem employee and each of these reasons is usually a result of one of three major sources of unsatisfactory performance:

- 1.) Managerial and Organizational Shortcomings
- 2.) Individual and Personal Shortcomings
- 3.) Outside Influences<sup>7</sup>

Experience shows that one of the major causes of unsatisfactory performance can be attributed to the organization itself or to the management within the organization.<sup>8</sup> Some of the business-related problems that have been attributed to the organization and are proven to have a negative effect on employee performance are:

- 1.) Lack of proper motivational environment
- 2.) Personality problems
- 3.) Inappropriate job assignment
- 4.) Improper supervision

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<sup>7</sup> Steinmetz, P. 2.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid., P. 2.



5.) Lack of training

6.) Failure to establish duties<sup>9</sup>

Even supervisors must have the proper motivational environment to get the job done. If a supervisor is limited in job performance by superior officers, then performance will be poor. A supervisor must be encouraged to supervise and be allowed the flexibility necessary to accomplish good job performance. If a supervisor feels stifled by administration or does not have the support necessary to do the job, then the obvious result is a rebellious and problem attitude. Many supervisors come to police work with the expectation of promotion, pay increases, and enlarging job responsibilities. Not all of the expectations can be met. Frustration occurs, enthusiasm for the job diminishes, and behavior changes, often for the worse.<sup>10</sup>

Personality problems can play a large part in the overall attitude of a supervisor. If a problem exists with superiors or peers, then failure to correct the problem could result in the poor performance of the supervisor. A cordial, working relationship between all levels of supervision must be maintained.

If a supervisor is assigned to an unsuitable position such as supervising civilian employees in records or dispatch, a poor attitude is very commonly reflected in the supervisor. Assigning a patrol supervisor to work in the jail or dispatch is perceived by many officers as being a punishment tour.

A supervisor can easily become a problem employee without

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<sup>9</sup> Ibid., P. 7.

<sup>10</sup>Robinette, Hillary M., "The Police Problem Employee" Police Management Today, 1985, P. 187.

proper training. While lengthy experience as a police officer certainly makes it easier for one to understand the how and why of supervisory and middle-management responsibilities, this experience alone is inadequate for such jobs.<sup>11</sup> Supervisory skills must be taught as well as developed by on the job training. If a supervisor does not have the skills necessary to do the job, then failure appears imminent.

The duties of the supervisor must be defined so the responsibilities and expectations are clear. It is extremely frustrating to both the supervisor and subordinates when their duties are poorly defined, and the supervisor is placed in a position where no policy exists and only arbitrary decisions can result.

A second major cause of unsatisfactory performance as it relates to the organization lies within the employee.<sup>12</sup> In some cases they are sufficient in and of themselves to cause unsatisfactory performance by the individual. Some of the causes of unsatisfactory performance as they relate to individual and personal shortcomings include:

- 1.) Lack of motivation
- 2.) Laziness
- 3.) Personality clashes
- 4.) Dissatisfaction with job assignment
- 5.) Failure to understand one's duties

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<sup>11</sup>Henry, Vincent and Grennan, Sean, "Professionalism Through Police Supervisory Training" Police Practice in the '90s. (1989) P. 137.

<sup>12</sup> Steinmetz, P. 8.

6.) Chronic absenteeism

7.) Chronic illness

8.) Senility<sup>13</sup>

Many of the causes of unsatisfactory performance which can be attributed to the employee are very similar in nature to the problems attributed to the organization. The difference in the two is that the problems caused by the employees are viewed from the employee perspective and may or may not necessarily be job related.

Some employees are simply lazy and hard to motivate. They may be quite happy and content with their job, especially if they don't have to do anything.<sup>14</sup> A lazy, unmotivated supervisor is obviously a problem supervisor because the example set will be the example followed.

Personality clashes between a supervisor and either subordinates or peers is without a doubt the most noticeable of all the problems that can be associated with a supervisor. The supervisor who is not personnel oriented is usually the cause of low morale and productivity within a department.

Dissatisfaction with job assignment and failure to understand one's duties are directly related to job performance. The supervisors problems associated with dissatisfaction with job assignment and failure to understand one's duties are similar in nature from both the organization's and the individual's perspective.

Chronic absenteeism, chronic illness, and senility are health

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<sup>13</sup> Ibid., P. 17.

<sup>14</sup>Whisenand, Paul M. and Rush, George E. Supervising Police Personnel. New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 1988. P. 59.

related problems that have an adverse impact on the department, especially at the supervisory level. One of the major disruptions in a police department is absenteeism, necessitating the short notice replacement of personnel. The absence of supervisors disrupts the department in several ways. Shift personnel are forced to work with unfamiliar, replacement supervisors. Often, the officers are hesitant to do their jobs because of uncertainty about what the replacement supervisor expects.

The third major cause of unsatisfactory performance is what might be classified as outside or non-job related influences upon the person. These outside influences can take a variety of forms and may be more or less important at any particular time. Outside influences can be:

- 1.) Drug-alcohol addiction
- 2.) Emotional-mental health problems
- 3.) Compulsive gambling
- 4.) Legal problems
- 5.) Family-marital problems
- 6.) Stress
- 7.) Finances
- 8.) Mourning-loss
- 9.) Midlife crisis
- 10.) Climate
- 11.) Social mores<sup>15</sup>

The third major cause of unsatisfactory performance can best

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<sup>15</sup> Myers, Donald W., Employee Problem Prevention and Counseling (Westport, Connecticut: Quorum Books, 1985), P. 56.

be described as purely personal in nature and not a result of the job assignment. Even though these issues are not influenced by the job assignment, they can have a tremendous impact on the job itself. A supervisor experiencing any of these pressures from outside the workplace will obviously carry the results of these problems to work. When a supervisor is preoccupied with personal problems, it is very hard to give the job the required attention necessary for proper performance.

The primary reason why employees/supervisors dislike their jobs really has nothing to do with management of the organization, individual or personal problems, or outside, uncontrollable factors. It boils down to their fundamental attitude toward the job.<sup>16</sup> If the individual's attitude is bad, then performance will reflect that particular attitude. If a supervisor does not like a job or simply does not want to do the job, it is safe to assume that the job will not be done well. The effective supervisor must display the proper attitude that enhances job satisfaction and encourages goal setting.<sup>17</sup> Attitude relates directly to one's ability or willingness to perform satisfactorily on the job.<sup>18</sup>

When people fail to perform their jobs satisfactorily, it is for one of three reasons:

- 1.) They can't do the work
- 2.) They won't do the work

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<sup>16</sup> Steinmetz, P. 21.

<sup>17</sup> Whisenand, P. 59.

<sup>18</sup> Steinmetz, P. 21.

3.) They don't know how to do the work<sup>19</sup>

If the employee/supervisor can't or doesn't know how to do the job then the problem lies with upper management. Management has either failed to provide the training necessary to do the job or the wrong employee has been assigned to do the job.

If the employee/supervisor won't do the job, then the problem lies with the individual. The problems associated with a lack of motivation or a poor attitude have already been addressed.

If the employee/supervisor doesn't know how to do the job, then it is again a management problem caused by a poorly defined job description.

EXAMPLE: Sergeant Smith's problem was a deep-rooted personality clash with several of the higher ranking supervisors within the department. Sergeant Smith felt mistreated by some supervisors and angered by another officer's better performance on a promotional examination. Sergeant Smith's resentment of superiors had increased to the point that a negative attitude toward the department became evident. Sergeant Smith then began a deliberate attempt to undermine the efforts of these supervisors. Sergeant Smith's efforts were even expanded to include general disruption within the department whenever opportunity presented itself. Officers would later testify that Sergeant Smith had articulated the supposed maltreatment and intentions to pay back the people

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<sup>19</sup> Ibid., P. 21.

that had mistreated him. The same officers also testified that Sergeant Smith encouraged them to participate in actions that made it harder on the administrators of the department. Sergeant Smith was obviously set on disruption to retaliate against the department for alleged injustices. A series of internal investigations consisting of interviews with staff officers, sergeants, patrol officers and Sergeant Smith failed to show where any of these actions were justified. All of the policies that were attacked by Sergeant Smith were closely reviewed for consistency and fairness. On all of the issues addressed with lower ranking supervisors and officers in the department, none were found to be inconsistent or unfair. The investigation revealed that Sergeant Smith was not speaking out against a perceived unfairness, but was simply trying to disrupt the operation of the department to retaliate against the administrators of the department. Shortly after the first internal investigation concluded, Sergeant Smith confided in a patrol officer that the department could not detect wrong doing because the sergeant knew the code of conduct and general orders too well.

#### EFFECT OF THE PROBLEM SUPERVISOR ON THE DEPARTMENT:

Depending on the size of the department, the span of control of the problem supervisor and the supervisor's intent, the negative effect on the department can be devastating. A supervisor working in a small department can effect the overall operation of the department as the manager's direct control covers almost all the

employees. In a larger department, the problem supervisors control and effect is limited to the people directly supervised and those contacted in the performance of their duties.

The damage inflicted on a department is also directly related to the intent of the supervisor. A supervisor set on disruption, as in the example of Sergeant Smith, can manipulate employees and working conditions to such a degree that work performance and employee morale are substantially affected. When an individual is intentionally trying to cause problems within an organization these efforts will be directed toward disruption. At the same time the supervisor will be trying to disguise or hide efforts to avoid disciplinary action. The problem individual will be hard to catch because of secrecy. Sergeant Smith's example was found to be one of obvious intent to cause disruption in the department and the overall negative impact on the department was substantial. It is not unusual for the supervisor set on causing disruption in an organization to enlist the aid of others. Normally these individuals will be subordinate officers loyal to the cause.<sup>20</sup>

A supervisor that creates a problem through ignorance or mistake is not going to have the same overall effect on a department as the supervisor who intentionally causes a problem. The errors of a supervisor that simply makes mistakes are normally easy to isolate and identify. As this type of supervisor is not trying to disguise or hide mistakes, normally early identification and then proper corrections can be made.

It is easy for the members of a department to lose faith in a

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<sup>20</sup>Interview, Benbrook, Texas Public Safety Director B. W. Richardson, Benbrook Police Department, December 10, 1992.



supervisor when actions are inconsistent or the supervisor appears indecisive. This is especially true in law enforcement where quick and accurate decisions must be made in the critical and sometimes life threatening situations a supervisor must react to.<sup>21</sup>

One of the obvious strengths of the problem supervisor is an ability to take advantage of the special relationships developed with subordinates because of the critical and life threatening decisions the supervisor has to make. The recent incident in Los Angeles involving the alleged brutality by police officers against Rodney King is a perfect example of this type of relationship. The supervisor not only allowed the officers to use excessive force against Rodney King, but actually participated in the beating. The supervisor later tried to protect his officers from the charges arising from the incident.

In some cases the behavior of the problem supervisor can be criminal in nature and when caught, can have an extremely negative impact on the department. In a department where a climate of corruption prevails, especially among the supervisors, commanding officers are unlikely to achieve satisfactory levels of either discipline or productivity. The corrupt supervisor lacks the moral authority to command obedience.<sup>22</sup>

The problem supervisor will sometimes engage in counter-productive behavior which will involve causing trouble and doing

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<sup>21</sup> Interview, Benbrook, Texas Public Safety Director Chief B. W. Richardson, Benbrook Police Department, December 11, 1991.

<sup>22</sup>Murphy, Patrick V., "Corruptive Influence." Local Government Police Management (1982): 54.

work badly on purpose.<sup>23</sup> It is not unusual for the problem supervisor to become a member of the various cliques and special interest groups within a department which may share an anti-administration point of view. Instead of taking action to develop a chain of communication with the special interests groups that could be influenced in a positive way, the problem supervisor may even become the informal leader of the clique or special interest group due to perceived power within the department. In the safety of the cliques, the supervisor is able to vent frustrations and angers at the current situation and downgrade the department at every opportunity. As cliques are typically oriented against other groups or actions within its work setting, it is easy for the problem supervisor to manipulate the cliques to work against an organization.<sup>24</sup> The problem supervisor will sometime take on the function of a union shop steward and constantly buck management on behalf of labor.<sup>25</sup> As stated earlier, the supervisor is a highly visible part of the department and this unacceptable conduct is usually the example to be followed. When the example is out of line, it is only normal to assume that the followers will act accordingly.

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<sup>23</sup> Gruneberg, Michael M., Understanding Job Satisfaction (New York, New York: John Wiley & Sons, 1979), P. 118.

<sup>24</sup> Favreau, Donald F. and Gillespie, Joseph E., Modern Police Administration (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall Inc., 1978), P. 105.

<sup>25</sup> Melnicoe, William B. and Mennig, Jan C. Elements of Police Supervision. New York: MacMillan Publishing Co., Inc., 1978.

EXAMPLE: Sergeant Smith was able to cause a lot of disruption and dissention in the Problemsville Police Department through misusing authority to win the confidence of a number of impressionable, young officers in the department. Sergeant Smith was then able to convince some of the younger officers that the Problemsville Police Department was unfair in many of its practices and actually had some of the officers convinced they should seek employment elsewhere.

Sergeant Smith was not merely speaking out against the factual unfairness of a real situation. It was later determined that this information given to subordinate officers were lies and obvious distortions to the truth. Many of the younger officers in the department were afraid to go before a disciplinary review board because Sergeant Smith had them convinced that the punishment would be more severe than the punishment recommended by Smith. Sergeant Smith was advising the officers that the disciplinary review board would only do what the administrators of the department told it to do. In almost every hearing held by the disciplinary review board, which consisted of the officer's peers, a lighter disciplinary sentence was administered than was recommended by the sergeants and the command staff.

The other sergeants began to lose control of some of the officers on their shifts because Sergeant Smith was continually telling the officers how inefficient and untrustworthy the other sergeants were. Ironically, almost all of the sergeants had a higher efficiency and evaluation score than Sergeant Smith, but this information was not known to the patrol officers.

Many of the officers in the department blamed their poor

morale problems on the efforts of Sergeant Smith to cause dissention.

#### DOCUMENTING THE PROBLEM:

Regardless of the rank of an individual in a police department, a corrective action taken against that individual would be futile without proper documentation. Almost all systems allow for an appellate process to determine the correctness or validity of disciplinary actions. In most instances, especially a civil service department like the one used in this paper's example, a prima facie case must be presented to the civil service commission before disciplinary action can be pursued against an individual. If the case cannot be properly documented, the disciplinary action will be dismissed.<sup>26</sup>

Documentation is also necessary for a department to use a progressive form of disciplinary punishment. In other words, disciplinary punishment actually increases as an individual repeatedly commits the same or similar violations.<sup>27</sup> Without the proper documentation to show that an individual has previously committed an infraction of the rules, it would be almost impossible to apply a progressive form of disciplinary action against an

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<sup>26</sup>Miller, Richard J. Texas Firemen's and Policemen's Civil Service Law (Boerne, Texas: Francis Marion Inc., 1991), Section 143.052-2.

<sup>27</sup>Benbrook, Texas, Police Dept., "Departmental Manual" (Benbrook, Texas: 1992), Section C-5.

individual.

Many departments use a system of documented counselling, written reprimands, probation, suspension, demotion, and finally termination in their disciplinary process. Each incident increases the amount of punishment for a similar violation until eventually a violator could face termination for a relatively minor violation. This system will only work if each and every violation is properly documented for future reference.

#### CORRECTING THE PROBLEM:

Once the problem supervisor has been identified, the next issue that must be addressed is what is causing the supervisor's unsatisfactory performance. The supervisor should be contacted by the immediate supervisor to determine what action needs to be taken by the department to get the supervisor back on the right track.<sup>28</sup> Action against a supervisor should only be taken after the exact nature of the problem has been identified and a possible solution considered. A decision for dismissal of the problem supervisor or a decision for salvage with the required coaching and counseling must be made by the problem supervisors commanding officers.<sup>29</sup>

If the problem has been identified as a skill deficiency then

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<sup>28</sup> Interview, Watauga, Texas Police Chief Bobby Whitmire, Telephone Interview, December 16, 1991.

<sup>29</sup>Robinette, "The Police Problem Employee", P. 191.

efforts to teach/train the supervisor can be undertaken.<sup>30</sup>

The supervisor should be closely monitored during this training, allowing for feedback from the supervisor. The supervisor should also receive the opportunity for plenty of practice in order to resharpen skills.<sup>31</sup> In other words, the supervisor should be allowed to supervise but should be closely monitored.

If the supervisor's problem is not a skill deficiency, then a determination should be made as to what other factors are causing the supervisors unsatisfactory performance. There are four general causes of such nonperformance which should be explored:

- 1.) Is it punishing to perform as desired?
- 2.) Is it rewarding to perform other than as desired?
- 3.) Does it matter whether performance is as desired?
- 4.) Are there obstacles to performing as desired?<sup>32</sup>

Once these four possible causes of nonperformance have been explored and the exact reason for the nonperformance isolated, if possible, then the decision should now be made as to how to handle the situation.

The problem supervisor's manager should then determine and communicate to the supervisor precisely what performance is expected of the supervisor. The following steps should be taken to make sure the problem supervisor thoroughly understands the

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<sup>30</sup> Mager, Robert F. and Pipe, Peter, Analyzing Performance Problems (Belmont, California: Lake Publishing Company, 1984), P. 29.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid., P. 42.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid., P. 60.

expectations of upper management:

- 1.) Define organizational requirements for the supervisor,
- 2.) Clarify the supervisor's responsibilities,
- 3.) Apportion individual objectives to the supervisor,
- 4.) Support the supervisor in achieving the required performance levels,
- 5.) Evaluate the supervisor's performance of the jobs required by the organization,
- 6.) Review the supervisor's performance so that the supervisor will know how the manager rates the supervisor's performance.<sup>33</sup>

If it has become obvious to upper management that the problem supervisor's situation is not correctable in the current job assignment, then the decision must be made to either transfer, demote or terminate the supervisor. One of the things that must be considered is the effect of transferring a problem supervisor. Without correcting the problem first, there's a very high probability that the undesired behavior will continue and the problems that are occurring in a restricted area could be spread to other areas of the department. The size of the department is a very important factor in determining whether a problem employee can be transferred. Larger departments can absorb problem supervisors into other areas of responsibility. If the supervisor's problem has been determined to be a result of personality difficulties in relating to others, then a job assignment requiring imaginative

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<sup>33</sup> Steinmetz, P. 39.

planning, or a very high degree of job knowledge with few or no employees to supervise should be considered.<sup>34</sup> Small departments are extremely limited in their options due to the limited number of places a supervisor can be transferred.

Other considerations that must be included is the amount of damage done by the problem supervisor. When dealing with the individual employee, the concern is to correct the one person. When dealing with a problem supervisor, by the time this conduct is corrected, negative traits may have been passed on to subordinates who now feel that the supervisor's conduct would be the acceptable norm.<sup>35</sup> It is then necessary to not only correct the supervisor but also to correct the problems passed on to the subordinates of the supervisor. If the decision is made to salvage the problem supervisor, one of the first issues that would have to be addressed is the supervisors credibility.<sup>36</sup> The salvaged supervisor would have to regain the confidence and respect of these subordinates. Once the supervisor has been reestablished as a competent supervisor, the respected leader will be imitated, consciously or unconsciously, by those led.<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>34</sup>Wilson, O. W. and McLaren, Roy Clinton, Police Administration (New York: McGraw-Hill Publishing Co., 1977) P. 150.

<sup>35</sup> Interview, Watauga, Texas Police Chief Bobby Whitmire, Telephone Interview, December 16, 1991.

<sup>36</sup>Iannone, P. 2.

<sup>37</sup>Iannone, P. 66.



EXAMPLE: As is usually the case with people working against an organization, Sergeant Smith was finally confronted on the issues and called to task on inappropriate activities. The officers were afraid to testify against Sergeant Smith because of fear of reprisals from him. As a result of the lack of testimony, demotion and termination were not viable options. Enough information was collected to give Sergeant Smith a series of verbal and written counseling sessions that documented the negative actions for future reference.

Sergeant Smith is still a member of the department but is closely scrutinized by the members of the department, not only the superiors but the subordinates as well. Sergeant Smith lost the shield of secrecy and as a result lost the power. The other sergeants in the department are closely monitoring the interaction of Sergeant Smith with the officers of the department and are quick to react if a problem is spotted.

Sergeant Smith was relieved of duty as tactical team leader and is no longer allowed to participate in the formal training process. Smith now runs a patrol shift under close supervision by the patrol lieutenant. Sergeant Smith is currently seeking employment elsewhere.

It would be wishful thinking to say that the problems with Sergeant Smith are over but the hard part is now behind the department. The problem has been identified and for the time being, controlled. The officers that have been effected by Sergeant Smith have been made aware of the negative influence. They are now aware that the department can and will take action to correct the problem of any employee, even a supervisor, that

demonstrates the desire to work against the department.

CONCLUSION:

As stated in the information supplied in this paper, it is imperative that the supervisor's problems be addressed in much the same way as any other employee. The only difference in this approach is the consideration given to the amount of control exercised by the supervisor. The unsatisfactory conduct of the supervisor is much more noticeable than the conduct of the individual employee because of the visibility and responsibility of the supervisor. Any supervisor bent on disruption can cause problems within the department due to his position of authority.

The moment a supervisor begins to believe that a subordinate's performance is becoming unsatisfactory, especially when the subordinate is a supervisor, it is time to deal with the problem.<sup>38</sup> The problem supervisor must be addressed immediately to prevent negative traits from being passed on to and adopted by subordinates.

The documentation process must be implemented as soon as possible to record any and all infractions committed by the supervisor. This will give the department's administrators a valuable tool to use when it is time to confront the problem supervisor. The documentation will also be invaluable if any of

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<sup>38</sup> Robinette, P. 24.

the actions or sanctions taken against the supervisor were to be tried in court.

The effect of the problem supervisor on subordinates must also be analyzed to see how much negative influence must be corrected in the employees. As the problem supervisor's responsibilities are greater, then obviously the effect is greater when the energies are misdirected.

The problem supervisor can be one of the most disruptive influences in a department and that performance can be directly related to the overall efficiency and morale of the department.

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