

FA RJW 3/9/97  
ABL5320  
615

THE BILL BLACKWOOD  
LAW ENFORCEMENT MANAGEMENT INSTITUTE OF TEXAS

PROMOTIONS TESTING  
WRITTEN EXAM VS ORAL INTERVIEWS

A Policy Research Project  
Submitted in Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements for the Professional Designation  
Graduate, Management Institute

BY

Efton L. Ford

Borger Police Department

Borger, Texas

September, 1997

Notice: This material may be protected  
by copyright law (Title 17 U. S. Code).

RESERVE

# 615

## **Abstract**

The purpose of this paper was to find a fair way to test employees for promotions. The development of a testing policy that the Borger Police Department could use. This test is to determine the employee's knowledge and talents. Borger Police Department for years used an oral interview system of it's not what you know, but rather who you know. A new policy was developed whereby the oral interview and a written exam are now used, giving special consideration to experience and the ability to do the job. This paper looked at the criteria for the development of a testing tool to assist on the decision as to who is the best person for the promotion. A copy of the policy is attached.

RESERVE

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

Section	Page
Introduction	1
Historical and Legal Context	2
Review of Literature and Legal Context	5
Conclusion/Recommendations	10
Bibliography	11

RESERVE

## INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this research is to compare and discuss the difference between a written exam and a oral interview. A combination of the two, could perhaps develop a program and or policy that would benefit the Borger Police Department.

The importance of a policy for testing for promotions has become more and more demanding; Employees waiting to promote can know and understand the rules and procedures of demanding promotional system. The study and research of this paper will be presented to upper level management, City Manager, and possibly the City Council.

Through the use of many books on Police Management and Police Journals, this research is intended to examine the pro's and con's of the written test vs the oral interview, in order to compile a comprehensive policy to use in a Police Department.

I will also attempt to determine what kind of questions to ask in the oral interview segment. A careful set of prearranged questions can assist the interviewer in setting the stage for the interview questions that are selected, to put the interviewer and the person being interviewed at ease. Once the person being interviewed is at ease, you can set the tone of the interview and possibly gain an insight into his or her personality and thereby asses an understanding or feeling about the person you interviewed.

## Historical, Legal or Theoretical Context

In the beginning God created the heavens and earth and all was dark. When the lights were turned on, we found there was not a policy or regulation manual that stated who would be the supervisors over different groups and how we would determine how we would pick them. In police work the lack of promotional opportunities can be attributed to the following factors.

1. Too few rank in the police organizational structure.
2. Inadequate number of supervisory positions at a given level, which results in spans of control that are too broad. This reduces effectiveness and minimizes incentives, and produces limited opportunity for promotion. As stated in the purpose segment of this paper will look at three types of testing for promotions.
  1. Oral interviews.
  2. Written exams.
  3. Both oral and written.

The Police Personnel System, written by Calvin J. Swank and James A. Conser. defines promotion as the movement upward from one classification or rank to another carrying higher pay and more responsibility.

The first thing to look at is the oral interview, which has

been around for many years, and is probably the least effective method to promote by. By the time an officer is considered for promotion usually they would have worked long enough on the streets, that the selected interview board knows what they can and cannot do. Opponents of this type of testing argue that there is a high potential for abuse because of the subjective nature of the oral board. In order to meet EEOC standards, the board must spell out the make up of the board, what is its purpose and how the candidates will be graded. A list of questions should be prepared so that all the candidates are asked the same questions, which will hopefully do away with the "Good Ole Boy" system. This is the system where the candidate has one or more friends on the board, which is very common in smaller departments. An oral interview and its makeup may vary from department to department. The board can consist of three to six and should be represented by law enforcement as well as some community representation as is the idea stated by, Community Police Administration, Jack L. Kuykendal and Peter C. Unsinger. This can be a very effective public relations program which lets the community get involved and have input.

The written exam is probably the best way to determine knowledge and insight into what the candidates are capable of doing. The written exam should consist of questions that a supervisor would be dealing with, such as questions about law, traffic, policies and procedures. The exam could possibly have

RESERVE

questions on Constitutional Law (current cases dealing with Law Enforcement issues.) The questions should also reflect some supervisory type questions, thereby giving the grader, a hint if the candidate has any supervisory skills. The person that is promoted should, as soon as possible, receive some type of supervisory training, so they will have a better understanding of what is required now as a result of their promotion.

After the written exam is over and before the Oral Interview starts, the candidates should be given a little time to reflect and time to relieve stress. The written exam after graded should reflect only a partial part of the total score. Sometimes policies or directive from the chief will dictate who are eligible to take the exam, depending on the promotion (sergeant-lieutenant) Depending on the experience needed for the position. Modern Police Administration by Donald F. Favreau - Joseph E. Gillespie states "When a patrolman is promoted to sergeant, he must begin to draw from a new and distinct body of knowledge. He has moved into management. He will no longer be judged on what he does as a person, he will now judged on how well he works with others."

#### **Review of Literature or Practice**

Preparing for promotion is an important career decision. This is particularly true today as the competition for supervisor and command positions in law enforcement agencies, regardless of

size, is fierce.

The forecast for those who are serious about promotion is that they must be more prepared today than ever before. The road to promotion is one of hard work and personal commitment. The key to success could very well be determined by how well they perform in the Assessment Center process.

The Assessment Center method of testing has become the common norm for police ranks from Sergeant to Chief. It is an effective way to evaluate the candidate's ability to demonstrate the skills required in a position at the next rank. When moving up the rank structure, the responsibility becomes greater and the testing more complex.

Motivated candidates are always preparing and learning about the next rank. Most officers who have experienced the Assessment Center testing will state that preparation is essential to success.

The following characteristics distinguish the Assessment Center system of testing from other methods for selecting promotional candidates:

- \*Multiple techniques are used to assess the candidate's skills including one or more "simulations."

- \*Multiple Assessors evaluate each candidates' behavior. The Assessors are trained in observation, recording, classifying and rating behavior.

- \*Simulation exercises measure a variety of predetermined

skills and must be validated. A thorough job analysis must be completed.

\*Actual work behavior is used to determine the skills to be measure.

\*Rating is based on the information obtained by the Assessors after observing all of the simulations.

As found in the Law and Order Magazine, the Assessment Center process links up, or matches, the various tasks to dimensions or skills. The more common Assessment Center dimensions include:

- \*Verbal communications
- \*Leadership
- \*Management control
- \*Flexibility
- \*Inter-personal skills
- \*Impact
- \*Written communication
- \*Planning and organization
- \*Perception
- \*Initiative
- \*Decisiveness

Common assessment center exercises are: the In-Basket, the Problem Employee or Employee Counseling, the Problem Coordination, the Leaderless Group, the Video/Radio Interactive Exercise, and the Field Command Situation. Assessment center

tests strive to simulate situations that a supervisor will face on a regular basis. The actions of the candidate during the exercises are recorded and scored on a task check list by trained assessors.

The In-Basket exercise is the most frequently used simulation on police assessment centers. The candidate is presented with a stack of paperwork that simulates what is typical for the rank that is being tested. The purpose of the exercise is to determine the candidate's ability to handle a large volume of work involving multiple tasks in a specific time frame.

The Employee Problem or Employee Discussion measures leadership abilities and interpersonal skills. The candidate receives a written background package that describes or outlines a problem that a subordinate is experiencing. The object is to meet with the role player, conduct an interview, map out a plan of action, and resolve the problem.

The Leaderless Group Discussion measures the ability to work effectively in a group setting. A topic is presented to a group for discussion with no designated leader or commander. The object is to observe an individual's contribution to the process and to evaluate the participation level for each participant.

Assessment Center testing is the most difficult examination most officers will ever take. The preparation required is much

different and more difficult than traditional paper and pencil multiple choice tests. Professional guidance by attending an Assessment Center preparation program is a good option for serious candidates.

The Assessment Center process is here to stay for law enforcement promotion for it is very job related. For those who dedicate the time and energy to master this method of testing, the result will be a promotion to the desired rank.

### Conclusion

After examining both oral interviews and written exams, it is believed that the Borger Police Department can benefit from both the oral and written exam, in the promotional process. This gives the personnel a fairer chance for promotion and hopefully, it will be the best for the department.

A new department policy would reflect the need for oral and written exams in the promotional process. The policy should also state the purpose of the testing and what should be the results. The policy should be clear and understood by all candidates involved in the promotional testing. After obtaining and reading some seventeen articles about oral interviews and written exams, nearly all of them agree that the police department should use both. Some of them suggest the use of Assessment Centers which in theory is good but not practical for small departments such as mine. Attached to this is a copy of a new revised policy for promotions testing, the Borger Police Department has. Using both

RESERVE

oral interviews and the written test are part of the policy.

RESERVE

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Berstein, Jeff. Law and Order Magazine; Volume 46, February 1988
- Blum, Richard H., "Police Selection". Pages 58, 59, 204.
- Clift, Raymond E., "Guide to Modern Police Thinking: 3rd Edition  
- "Science in Law Enforcement"
- Favreau, Donald F. - Joseph E. Gillespie "Modern Police  
Administration".
- Geller, William A., "Local Government Police Management", 3rd  
Edition. Pages 284, 285, 286, 287.
- Hale, Charles D. "Fundamental of Police Administration  
the Promotion Process." Pages 235-240
- Iannone, Nathan F., "Supervision of Police Personnel", 5th  
Edition. Pages 234, 235, 236.
- Kenny, John P. PhD "Police Administration" Revised Third  
Printing. Pages 123-124.
- Kuykendall, Jack L. - Peter C. Unsinger "Community Police  
Administration" page 254.
- McGinnis, James H. - Michael G. Petrunik, "American Journal of  
Police", Volume 12, Number 2, 1992. 77.
- Pell, Arthur R., "Police Leadership". Page 92.
- Preiss, Jack J. - Howard J. Ehrlich "An Examination of Role  
Theory". Pages 86-88.
- Preventing Law Enforcement Stress, the Organization's role  
Bureau of Justice Assistance U.S. Dept. of Justice  
Washington, D.C.
- Sheehan, Robert - Gary W. Cordner "Introduction to Police  
Administration A System/Behavioral Approach with Case  
Studies". Pages 180-181.
- Swank, Calvin J. - James A. Conser "The Police Personnel System"  
Chapter 15. Pages 278 - 292

RESERVE

Thibault, Edward A., "Proactive Police Management". Pages 64-65.

Truitt, John O. and Neil C. Chamelin "Contemporary Law  
Enforcement; Personnel issue (Cases and Problems)."

Vanaunas, Stanley - James F. Elliot "Administration of Police  
Organization"

RESERVE

B O R G E R P O L I C E D E P A R T M E N T

REFERENCE: CHAPTER 34  
SUBJECT: PROMOTION-  
Procedures

POLICY #2  
DATE: 04/25/97  
Revised:

Purpose: to improve the validity of the promotional process;  
to inform all eligible officers of the procedures used for promotion;  
to ensure that candidates are evaluated by a promotion process that measures traits or characteristics that are a significant part of the job; and  
to select the person best qualified to meet the requirements of the supervisory position.

Discussion:

Promotion denotes vertical advancement in the organizational structure from one rank classification or position to another, usually accompanied by an increases in duties and responsibilities, as well as salary. Promotion of employees to leadership positions directly affects the future of an organization and it's success.

Policy:

It is the policy of the Borger Police Department to provide an equal opportunity for all sworn officers to be considered for promotion, based upon components and procedures tailored to meet agency needs, which are "job-related and nondiscriminatory".

This administration shall attempt to maintain the system's integrity, while promoting the employee who best demonstrates the potential for assuming greater responsibility, and who possess the skills, knowledge, and abilities required to perform at an advanced level.

While the Borger Police Department is not under "civil service" regulations, this written directive describes the procedures used for each element of the promotion process:

- \* evaluating the promotional potential of candidates;
- \* administering written tests;
- \* conducting oral interviews prior to appointment to orientation status;
- \* providing procedures for review and appeal of results for each promotional element by candidates; and
- \* establishing procedures for reapplication, retesting, and/or reevaluation.

RESERVE

B O R G E R P O L I C E D E P A R T M E N T

REFERENCE: CHAPTER 34  
SUBJECT: PROMOTION-  
Agency's role

POLICY #1  
DATE: 04/25/97

Purpose: to improve the validity of the promotional process; to select the best qualified person for the promotion in a fair and equitable manner:

- \* who displays the potential for assuming greater responsibility;
- \* who possesses the job skills, knowledge, and abilities necessary to perform at the designated promotional level.

Definitions:

1. Promotion: being raised in position or rank; a vertical movement in the organizational hierarchy from one rank classification to another, accompanied by a salary increase.
2. Skills, Knowledge, and Abilities (SKA):
  - a. Skills are the proficiency with which an individual performs;
  - b. Knowledge is a body of information or the understanding gained through learning, education, experience, or associations;
  - c. Abilities are processes required to perform the various job responsibilities.

Policy:

Promotions to leadership positions directly affects the future success of the organization. Selection of personnel for promotion begins with the identification of officers who appear to have the potential for assuming greater responsibility and who have the skills, knowledge, and abilities to perform at a higher level. Decisions about promotion should be based upon the written job descriptions.

Promotions will be chosen in an objective and systematic manner, based upon the following factors:

- \* Education
- \* Law Enforcement Experience
- \* Demonstrated Performance (SKA)

RESERVE

The Borger Police Department does not use "assessment" centers; and does not permit lateral entry regarding promotions.

Procedure:

A. Promotional potential of candidates:

1. While attempting to predict an employee's performance at a higher level (promotional potential) is difficult, the Chief of Police, along with potential candidates, will be responsible to carefully review the appropriate "Job Description" to determine promotional potential.
2. The Chief of Police shall carefully review previous performance evaluations to determine an employee's initial eligibility for promotion.
3. Minimum Requirements, include:
  - a. Successful completion of the six month orientation period for new employees.
  - b. Minimum of two years of law enforcement experience as a state certified Law Enforcement Officer, in the preceding rank. Hold an intermediate Certification from TCLEOSE.
  - c. An employee must meet the eligibility requirements established in the job description.
  - d. Candidate's submittal of "letter of intent" to participate in the promotion process, stating why they would be the best candidate.

B. WRITTEN EXAMS will be administered by the Chief of Police or his designate for "First-Line" Supervisors.

1. Notification: Whenever there is a vacancy, the Chief of Police shall meet with all interested, eligible officers, to inform potential candidates regarding the vacancy, including- job description (duties and responsibilities), salary, and the promotional process. An announcement shall be posted prominently and in a timely fashion, regarding the promotional process, which includes, at a minimum:

- \* a concise description of the vacancy;
- \* the salary;
- \* the duties and responsibilities;
- \* skills, knowledge, and abilities;
- \* dates, times, and locations;
- \* a list of study materials; and
- \* a description of the selection process.

RESERVE

2. Exam Specifications: The Chief of Police shall determine the material that candidates shall be tested for each promotional exam, which shall accurately reflect the knowledge, skills, and understanding required to perform the designated job, effectively:
  - a. All candidates will be provided in writing a list of all reading/testing materials, which shall be job-related and nondiscriminatory;
  - b. Adequate time [30-days] shall be provided to allow each candidate sufficient time to study and prepare for the promotional exam;
  - c. The written exam shall consist of 100 multiple-choice questions. All test questions shall be restricted to the study material listed in the notice of the promotional process.
3. Date, Time, & Location: All candidates must take the promotional exam in the presence of each other, at the same date, time, and location. The individual officer is responsible to notify the Chief of Police concerning his absence:
  - a. If an officer knows in advance that he will be unable to take the test as scheduled, he must provide written notification to the Chief of Police prior to the testing date, stating his reason for noncompliance with the stated schedule date;
  - b. If an officer is absent on the scheduled test date due to circumstances beyond his control, he must notify the Chief of Police, as soon as possible, of the reason for his absence. Testing shall be at the discretion of the Chief of Police
4. Duration: Candidates will have two hours to complete the exam.
5. Testing Materials: Candidates are prohibited from bringing or removing any materials from the testing site. Upon completion or at the expiration of the designated time period, candidates will turn in all testing materials, including tests and answer sheets.
6. Written Examination Review: Upon completion of the test, examinations shall be graded at the examination site. After tests have been scored, officers will be afforded an opportunity to review the test and their answer sheet, and to challenge any test question or answer (within three days).

RESERVE

7. The Chief of Police is responsible for maintaining test material and all other material relating to promotions in a secure, "confidential" manner.

C. Eligibility List: The criteria and procedures for the development and use of an eligibility list for First-Line Supervisors shall include, at a minimum:

1. Written Exam: Candidates must score a passing grade of at least seventy correct answers (70%) for further consideration for promotion.

- a. Those who do not pass the written examination will be eliminated from further consideration.

- b. The written exam will account up to 50% of the candidate's numerical weight, based upon individual test scores:

* 90-100	50%
* 80- 90	40%
* 70- 80	30%

2. TCLEOSE Certificates, which accounts for education and experience, will account toward the candidate's numerical weight, with the exception of the Basic Certificate:

a. Intermediate	5%
b. Advanced	5%
c. Masters	5%
d. Instructors	5%

3. Oral Interviews: Each candidate shall participate in a structured oral interview, which shall comprise 30% of the promotional process.

4. Criteria for eligibility:

* written exam	50%
* certificates	20%
* oral interview	30%
Total....	100%

D. ORAL INTERVIEWS will be administered within a "structured" interview, whereby committee members adhere to the same general format with all candidates. However, it will be appropriate to ask additional, clarifying questions that are related to the candidate's qualifications.

1. An oral interview will be conducted by a three (3) member committee, appointed by the Chief of Police.

RESERVE

2. The oral interview board shall be designed to measure personal attributes necessary for the employee to adequately function in the promotional position.
3. The oral interview board shall act in an advisory capacity. This committee will be responsible to interview all candidates being considered for the promotion.
4. The "ChairPerson" is responsible for the scheduling, initiating, directing, and achieving the desired objectives of this committee:
  - \* schedules the interviews
  - \* initiates the interviews
  - \* sets the tone of the interviews
  - \* directs the interviews
  - \* coordinates the committee's activities
  - \* mediates to reconcile committee differences
  - \* prepares a summary evaluation
  - \* submits an eligibility list.

The ChairPerson's final responsibility will be to reduce to writing, giving a concise statement of the committee's findings and recommendations with justification, to the Chief of Police.

5. All questions must be job-related and nondiscriminatory.
6. During the oral interview, all candidates are requested to wear their police uniform.
7. Committee members will rate candidates uniformity in accordance with Chapter 34, listing the candidate's strengths / weaknesses; the interview results will be recorded on an approved, standardized agency form:
  - a. During the oral interview, candidates may be rated on a scale from 1 (lowest) to 5 (highest) for each dimension listed. The average rating will be computed by the ChairPerson.
  - b. At the bottom of the rating form, the Chairperson will mark the appropriate box (pass / fail) for each candidate, using the criteria contained in the Oral Interview Manual.
8. The oral interview should assess a clearly defined set of personal attributes, including:
  - \* Appearance
  - \* Dependability
  - \* Initiative

RESERVE

- \* Situational Reasoning Ability
- \* Interpersonal Skills
- \* Oral Communication Skills
- \* Job Knowledge
- \* Leadership Ability
- \* Supervisory Ability
- \* Loyalty
- \* Decisiveness
- \* Positive Attitude
- \* Integrity

9. The selection of a good supervisor should also include supervisory qualities of planning, organizing, and directing the agency's total resources, including personnel, toward the successful achievement of agency goals and objectives.
10. While **Seniority** has no direct relationship to supervisory ability or eligibility for promotion, and will not be used in the promotional process, such could be used in case of a tie-situation.

E. Selection of Candidate for Promotion:

1. Unless the Chief of Police has a valid reason for not appointing the person, the Chief of Police shall appoint the candidate having the highest numerical weight on the eligibility list, based upon written exams, TCLEOSE certificates, and oral interviews.
  - a. If the Chief of Police has a valid reason for passing over the candidate with the highest numerical weight, the Chief of Police shall file a written explanation with the City Manager.
  - b. The Chief of Police reserves the right for final selection.
2. Promotions shall be announced in the form of an agency personnel order from the Chief of Police, stating the effective date for the promotion, assignment, and a written explanation of the reason for appointment.
3. The duration of the eligibility list shall be one year from the date of the promotional exam.

- F. Lieutenant Position: While the promotion of First-Line Supervisors shall be promoted in accordance with established agency policy, the appointment for the position of Lieutenant, which is a **management** position directly responsible to the Chief of Police, shall be made at the exclusive discretion of the Chief of Police. The Chief of Police reserves the right to appoint or remove the Lieutenant without cause.

RESERVE

- G. ORIENTATION PERIOD: This agency will include an orientation period among the final steps in the promotional process to ensure a smooth transition from one level to the next supervisory level.
1. All employees who are promoted will be on a six (6) month orientation period.
  2. During the orientation period, employees will be closely observed, and their supervisory performance evaluated every 30-days by their immediate supervisor. The employee evaluations shall serve to identify the new supervisor's strengths and weaknesses, giving the employee the opportunity for improvement.
  3. Unsatisfactory performance should be identified, and corrected by counseling, training, or other suitable measures to safeguard against the promotion of employees beyond their capabilities.
  4. At any time during the orientation period, the employee may be requested to attend training, including remedial training.
  5. The orientation period may be extended at the direction of the Chief of Police.
  6. Upon completion of the six month orientation period, a final written employee evaluation should be submitted by the Chief of Police to the City Manager. Permanent status will be granted only if work performance has been adjudged to be satisfactory by the Chief of Police.
- H. APPEAL PROCESS: The right of employees to review and/or challenge any aspect of the promotional process is an integral part of the process itself. If the candidate is not satisfied with the Chief of Police's promotional decision, the candidate may invoke the city's grievance procedure.
- I. Reapplication, retesting, and/or reevaluation procedures:
1. If subsequent to an appeal, it is determined that any part of the promotional process was inadequate or unfair toward a particular candidate, the Chief of Police shall reevaluate the promotional process, and if necessary-retest all candidates.
  2. Upon expiration of the "eligibility list", any future promotional opportunities will require reapplication, retesting, and reevaluation.

---

Chief of Police

Standards: 34.1.3  
34.1.7

RESERVE

- \* Written Exam
- \* Oral Interview

The Borger Police Department shall be the exclusive agency involved in the promotional process. The Chief of Police is responsible for the promotional process, including the preparing, scheduling, and monitoring of the promotional process and examinations. The Chief of Police retains the final approval or selection for promotions.

Procedure:

1. The Chief of Police or his designate will retain the authority and responsibility for administering all promotions within the police department, including oral interviews and orientation periods.
2. The department will provide on an equitable basis all study materials for testing purposes.
3. The Chief of Police shall be responsible for the development of, and the distribution of testing material.
4. Such testing material should be used in determining the skills, knowledge, and abilities of the position to be filled.

---

Chief of Police

Standards: 34.1.1  
34.1.2

RESERVE