

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

**Combining 8-Hour and 12-Hour Shifts to Improve
Recruitment and
Retention While Preserving Morale**

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ABSTRACT

Law enforcement agencies have been forced to explore new ways to recruit and retain qualified personnel. This has been caused by competitive financial compensation and benefit packages from both the private sector and other law enforcement agencies. The current generation entering the workforce places emphasis on the availability of time off and flexible schedules. This can be an extremely difficult expectation to accommodate due to the shift work required to staff 24/7 operations that are, by nature, a requirement of patrol and jail functions. One way to increase the availability of time off is by utilizing a combination of 8-hour and 12-hour shifts to staff 24/7 operations. Combining 8-hour and 12-hour shifts also has the advantage of accommodating senior personnel that can have difficulty transitioning, both mentally and physically, to an extended work schedule. Implementing a combined work schedule will create two primary areas of concern, difficulties in the scheduling itself and supervisory accountability. Both of these areas of concern can be addressed by the utilization of “master” documents that will assist in the creation of daily schedules and the documentation of employee performance. Combining 8-hour and 12-hour shifts almost doubles the number of employees that have weekend days off without lowering minimum staffing levels. By combining 8-hour and 12-hour shifts, law enforcement agencies can improve recruitment and retention while preserving the morale of senior employees and increasing the morale of the younger employees.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
Abstract	
Introduction	1
Position	2
Counter Position	7
Recommendation	10
References	12
Appendix A	
Appendix B	

INTRODUCTION

The recruiting and retention of qualified police officers has become increasingly competitive among law enforcement agencies across the state. This increased difficulty in recruitment and retention has resulted in more competitive financial compensation and benefits packages that have been attained primarily from conducting salary and benefit surveys among similar sized agencies in the same geographic region. This competitiveness has forced law enforcement agencies to look at other types of incentives to attract prospective applicants as well as retain officers that represent an enormous investment of both time and financial resources.

The current generation entering the workforce is known as Generation Y, also referred to as the millennial generation. Studies have shown that Generation Y is motivated by the availability of flexible schedules and time off as much as, if not more than, financial compensation (Twenge, Campbell, Hoffman, & Lance, 2010). Agencies that are willing to offer a variety of staffing options to new employees can capitalize on this generational expectation. The majority of new employees entering the field of law enforcement will be assigned to either jail or patrol operations, both of which are a 24/7 assignment staffed by either fixed or rotating shifts. For many new employees this will be their first experience with shift work which is often staffed according to one primary factor, seniority.

Traditionally, law enforcement agencies have staffed their 24/7 operations with three 8-hour shifts per day. More and more agencies are moving to two 12-hour shifts per day (Amendola, Slipka, Hamilton, Soelberg, & Koval, 2011), as there have been numerous studies completed demonstrating several benefits over the traditional 8-hour

shifts. The studies do acknowledge that the move to 12-hour shifts does not positively impact all employees in the organization. Senior employees that have sometimes worked decades on an 8 hour schedule have difficulty adapting, both mentally and physically, to an extended work schedule.

In addition, most senior employees have had weekend days off for years and are very reluctant to relinquish them just so the “rookies” can have better days off. Senior officers are also from different generations, primarily Generation X and Baby Boomers. Their belief is that new employees should “put their time in” and “earn” better days off through seniority (Twenge et al., 2010). Agencies can easily alienate their senior employees, as well as create morale issues, when these factors are not taken into consideration while implementing schedule changes. Consequently, this can decrease motivation and reduce cohesiveness between the generations. Law enforcement agencies can reduce these drawbacks by considering alternatives to combine both 8-hour and 12-hour schedules to staff their 24/7 operations. Law enforcement agencies should consider a combination of 8-hour and 12-hour shifts to improve recruiting and retention while preserving morale at all levels of seniority.

POSITION

Recruiting has become increasingly difficult for law enforcement agencies due to several factors. Law enforcement agencies are unable to offer the same incentives available in the private sector such as signing bonuses, salary and benefits negotiations and alternate locations of the actual worksite. It is very arduous for law enforcement recruiters to compete in the job-fair market where they are faced with having to offer lower salaries and undesirable shift work assignments. In addition, law enforcement

agencies themselves have become increasingly competitive in the area of financial compensation and benefits. Fortunately, law enforcement administrators have been able to successfully demonstrate the need to be competitive to their municipal and county elected officials to attract qualified applicants that could easily choose to go to a neighboring jurisdiction.

This has resulted in the need to also be competitive in those areas that the current generation of applicants entering the workforce deem important. Studies have shown that although compensation is important to Generation Y, the availability of time off and flexible scheduling is equally, if not more, important (Twenge et al., 2010). A primary reason to consider incorporating 12-hour shifts is the added potential for new employees to have access to at least some weekend days off without otherwise having to wait years to attain the level of seniority needed to obtain them.

Numerous studies have shown that 12-hour shift schedules can provide several benefits. Boone found it can increase coverage during peak call volume hours (Walker & Eisenberg, 1995). 12-hour shifts have been shown to reduce overtime (Sundermeier, 2008). Twelve hour shifts have also been shown reduce the use of sick time (Bloodworth, Lea, Lane, & Ginn, 2001). Twelve hour shifts can also create an increased team concept at the squad level (Sundermeier, 2008).

If a new law enforcement agency were being formed, research studies would be able to prove that using a 12-hour work schedule would be most beneficial in the long term success of the organization. In that scenario, all officers would have a similar amount of seniority; therefore there would be little expectation of some having more desirable days off than others. The truth, however, is that this seldom occurs. Most

often the situation is that a long established law enforcement agency is considering the transition from the traditional 8-hour shifts to 12-hour shifts. These agencies and their personnel have deeply ingrained concepts of seniority and the benefits and privileges that seniority provides. These concepts and beliefs must be taken into consideration to successfully implement a new schedule.

Agencies considering the addition of 12-hour shifts may find that there is a clear and decisive division among the levels of seniority as to how to implement this change. Senior officers assigned to preferred days off, primarily weekends, will not want to forfeit this privilege and move to a schedule where they would be sharing these days off with officers having little seniority. Senior officers are from a different generation than new officers entering the workplace and believe preferred days off are a privilege that is earned by years of service to the organization. Conversely, officers with little seniority will embrace the change as it affords them the opportunity to have days off that would have taken them years to achieve otherwise. By utilizing a combination of 8-hour and 12-hour shifts, agencies can offer more staffing options where all levels of seniority will benefit from the transition.

An agency should carefully consider the generational differences among employees in the organization. Senior employees represent generation X and the baby boomer generation. These generations strongly believe in the concept of rank and seniority and believe that they possess a much stronger work ethic than generation Y. They also believe that generation Y has no loyalty to the organization and have a "what's in it for me" attitude (Gerdes, 2009). The baby boomer generation believes that their work is the most important aspect of their lives. They believe their work defines

them as a person and fundamentally have a “live to work” mentality (Twenge et al., 2010). Baby boomers believe their performance is based on how much time they spend at their job. Generation X strikes more of a balance between their work and their personal lives. They have more of a “work to live” mentality and believe their performance is based on the amount of outcome produced rather than how long it takes to do it (Twenge et al., 2010). Generation Y has just the opposite opinion as their older counterparts. They believe that the workplace should be fun and they value their time spent away from work. Generation Y wants immediate responsibility and do not believe in the concept that seniority equals competence. Generation y is quick to ask “why” and strives to find ways to improve established norms and procedures.

Another factor to consider when adding 12-hour shifts are the effects extended shift work can have on the senior (older) members of the organization. These effects are primarily the mental and physical fatigue that can lead to complacency, mistakes and errors in judgment. Studies that found older employees experienced significantly higher amounts of stress (Hoffman & Scott, 2003) and physical and emotional exhaustion (Gabrielle, Jackson, & Mannix, 2009) when working 12-hour shifts. Caruso, Hitchcock, Dick, Russo & Schmit (2004) found an increased potential to make serious mistakes during the last two hours of a 12-hour shift as cited by Amendola, Weisburd and Hamilton (2011). Because of these areas of concern, law enforcement agencies should consider transitioning from traditional 8-hour shifts to a combination of both 8-hour and 12-hour shifts to staff their 24/7 operations to improve morale and productivity for all members of the organization.

To demonstrate how a combination of 8-hour and 12-hour shifts can be implemented a hypothetical patrol division consisting of 50 officers will be utilized. Two hypothetical staffing models will show the benefits related to incorporating a combination of 8 and 12 hour shifts, allowing a greater number of officers to enjoy weekend days off while still meeting minimum staffing requirements. Appendix A shows the traditional 8-hour shift schedule that commonly utilizes four different shifts comprised of Shift 1 (Day Shift), Shift 2 (Evening Shift), Shift 3 (Night Shift) and Shift 4, commonly referred to as a (Power Shift) that works during the peak days and hours of the week. This staffing model shows that only 20 officers have a Saturday or Sunday off. This model also offers only four different options for work hours. Appendix B shows a combination of fixed 8-hour and rotating 12-hour shifts.

The 12-hour rotating schedule works the following days during a two week pay period. The shift works Friday/Saturday/Sunday, off Monday/Tuesday, works Wednesday/Thursday, off Friday/Saturday/Sunday. This model incorporates a 4-hour "Kelly" day that is spread out among the employees during the two week pay period to reach the desired 80-hours. This staffing model shows that 38 officers have a Saturday or Sunday off. This model also offers seven different options for work hours.

COUNTER POSITION

An agency that commits to combining 8-hour and 12-hour shifts can anticipate two primary areas of concern that will cause logistical and supervisory issues. The first potential issue is the scheduling itself. Managing multiple overlapping shifts can become a significant source of frustration for the front line supervisors attempting to maintain minimum staffing levels. Simply creating the daily roster and district

assignments will require managing multiple shift rosters and calendars. Managing the calendars also involves ensuring that only a specified number of officers are allowed time off on any particular day. Situations will arise where an officer has a last minute emergency and needs off but there is already someone else scheduled off for that day on his particular shift. The supervisor would then need to check the overlapping shift calendars to see if anyone was off on those shifts to determine if an actual staffing shortage needed to be covered with overtime (Amendola, Weisburd & Hamilton, 2011).

A way to solve these scheduling issues is to reverse the process of creating a daily roster by determining what officers were available that day and placing them in various districts for coverage. For the purpose of describing this process, the hypothetical staffing model described above will be utilized. Most agencies work on a two week pay period. The first step would be to create a set of 14 “master” rosters, one for each specific day of the pay period. Each master roster would include every officer that would normally be scheduled to work that day and place them in their specified time slots and preferred districts during the 24 hour period. The next step would be to create a “master” time-off calendar where each day is divided into seven different shifts. Each shift is allowed to have one person off. To create a daily roster the supervisor simply opens up the master roster for that specific day in the pay period and then deletes the personnel that have scheduled time off for that day. If necessary, the remaining officers can then be moved to fill any district that is uncovered as a result of the missing officers. An added benefit of this system is the elimination of unnecessary overtime when a last minute situation arises requiring an officer to be absent. The supervisor can easily see if the unanticipated absence will cause staffing to fall below established minimums. An

example would be a Shift 1 officer receives a last minute court subpoena and a Shift 1 already an officer scheduled for time off that day. The supervisor then looks at either the roster or the master time-off calendar and sees that no Shift 4 officer requested off that day therefore no overtime situation has been created.

A second area of concern is supervisory accountability. Another result of the traditional 8-hour shift has been the possessive “my employee” attitude of the front line supervisors. There has oftentimes been the mentality between the shift supervisors that this is “my” officer and if “you” have a problem with them “you” will bring it to “me” to handle. There is also the inherent inconsistency between shifts with an example being “this is how we do it on nights”. This attitude was for the most part tolerated because an officer in fact usually did just report to a single supervisor (Amendola, Weisburd & Hamilton, 2011).

When going to multiple overlapping shifts, officers will find themselves reporting to different supervisors, not only during their tour of duty, but during different days of the week. This results in inconsistent, or worse, nonexistent documentation of an officer’s positive or negative performance (Amendola, Weisburd & Hamilton, 2011). An example would be an officer fails to submit a report that is required to be completed before the officer goes off-duty. The on-duty supervisor verbally counsels with the officer to correct the behavior. A week later the same officer again fails to submit a report. A different patrol supervisor is working that day resulting in another verbal counselling, as he is unaware of the prior incident. Two weeks later that same conduct occurs again with a different supervisor. An unacceptable conduct that should have been dealt with by increased levels of disciplinary action has been allowed to continue, because the

situation involved different supervisors who were unaware of each other's activities regarding the officer.

A way to solve this accountability issue is to again utilize a "master" document available to all the supervisory personnel within the division. A simple Excel spreadsheet can be created to document all disciplinary activities involving a particular officer. The document can be formatted where each officer has their own tab where supervisors can record any unacceptable behaviors that have been addressed. This document will allow other supervisors to determine if an increased level of disciplinary action is appropriate, should similar incidents occur. To simplify utilization of the document the tabs can employ drop down boxes with common issues that routinely need to be addressed by supervisors. The document should be made as user friendly as possible as to not discourage supervisors from utilizing it. The person tasked with creating the document should seek assistance if necessary to accomplish this goal. If needed, the organizations IT department would be a good resource to help design the document.

Another advantage of this document is that can also be used in a positive manner to record an outstanding job or a citizen compliment. By adding this dimension to the document, it creates a less negative opinion of the document itself. Even the name of the document is important to maintain a positive attitude for the idea. Although officers do not have the ability to edit the document, they can access it on the agency's central server. The agency should consider naming the document something positive like the "Activity log" rather than something negative like the "Counselling Log".

Another subtle and underlying advantage this document creates is officers will know their unacceptable behavior will no longer be able to “slip through the cracks”. All instances of inappropriate behavior are accurately documented so repeated violations will be addressed in an appropriate and consistent manner. And finally, this document becomes an invaluable tool when it is time to complete officer performance evaluations.

RECOMMENDATION

Law enforcement agencies are faced with ever increasing difficulties in recruiting and retaining qualified applicants. This is due to several factors including fixed salaries and benefits, increased competition from other law enforcement agencies and shift schedules that are not appealing to the current generation entering the workforce. The current generation demands flexible schedules and the availability of desirable days off to spend away from the workplace (Twenge et al., 2010). One way agencies can accommodate these demands is to incorporate 12-hours schedules into their 24/7 operations. Twelve hour shifts offer benefits to not only the officers but to the department as well. Twelve hour shifts can increase staffing levels, reduce overtime and reduce the use of sick time.

Congruently, agencies should understand and consider the negative effects the transition could have on existing employees. Senior employees are a vital and significant resource of any agency. Neglecting their needs and desires can have a devastating impact on morale and productivity throughout the organization.

An organization looking to improve recruitment and retention by adding 12-hour shifts should consider utilizing a combination of 8-hour and 12-hour shifts to improve morale and productivity throughout all levels of seniority in the organization. Combining

8-hour and 12-hour shifts creates multiple options for personnel, affording an opportunity to choose which shift would work best for them and their families. Some senior officers could potentially desire the 12-hour shift option and conversely some young officers may desire the 8-hour shift to accommodate things such as school or family obligations.

Combining 8-hour and 12-hour shifts is not an easy task to implement and requires careful planning and consideration to prevent scheduling and accountability issues. By creating documents that centralize all areas of scheduling and accountability, these issues can be successfully managed. The creation of these documents can also improve the process of scheduling, managing personnel and evaluating performance. A law enforcement agency that has a genuine concern for employee morale and well-being should be willing to commit the time and effort necessary to successfully implement a combination of 8-hour and 12-hour shifts in their 24/7 operations.

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APPENDIX A

EIGHTS - POWER SHIFT 20 OFFICERS HAVE A SATURDAY OR SUNDAY OFF									
SHIFT 1	6A/2P	2 OFF PER DAY		SGT SAT/SUN		SGT THU/FRI			
	SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT	0600	8
1	OFF	OFF						0700	8
2		OFF	OFF					0800	8
3			OFF	OFF				0900	8
4				OFF	OFF			1000	8
5					OFF	OFF		1030	8
6						OFF	OFF	1100	8
7	OFF						OFF	1200	8
8	OFF	OFF						1300	8
9		OFF	OFF					1400	8
10			OFF	OFF				1500	8
11				OFF	OFF			1600	11
12					OFF	OFF		1700	11
13						OFF	OFF	1800	11
14	OFF						OFF	1900	11
MINIMUM	8	8	8	8	8	8	8	2000	11
SHIFT 2	2P/10P	2 OFF PER DAY		SGT FRI/SAT		SGT SUN/MON			
	SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT	2100	11
1	OFF	OFF						2200	11
2		OFF	OFF					2300	11
3			OFF	OFF				0000	11
4				OFF	OFF			0100	11
5					OFF	OFF		0200	8
6						OFF	OFF	0300	8
7	OFF						OFF	0400	8
8	OFF	OFF						0500	8
9		OFF	OFF						
10			OFF	OFF					
11				OFF	OFF				
12					OFF	OFF			
13						OFF	OFF		
14	OFF						OFF		
MINIMUM	8	8	8	8	8	8	8		
SHIFT 3	10P/6A	2 OFF PER DAY		SGT FRI/SAT		SGT SUN/MON			
	SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT		
1	OFF	OFF							
2		OFF	OFF						
3			OFF	OFF					
4				OFF	OFF				
5					OFF	OFF			
6						OFF	OFF		
7	OFF						OFF		
8	OFF	OFF							
9		OFF	OFF						
10			OFF	OFF					
11				OFF	OFF				
12					OFF	OFF			
13						OFF	OFF		
14	OFF						OFF		
MINIMUM	8	8	8	8	8	8	8		
SHIFT 4	6P-2A	1 OFF PER DAY		SGT TUE/WED		SGT SUN/MON			
	SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT		
1	OFF	OFF							
2	OFF	OFF							
3		OFF	OFF						
4		OFF	OFF						
5			OFF	OFF					
6				OFF	OFF				
7					OFF	OFF			
8					OFF	OFF			
MINIMUM	5	3	3	3	5	7	7		
								TOTAL	50 OFFICERS

APPENDIX B

EIGHTS AND TWELVES - 38 OFFICERS HAVE A SATURDAY OR SUNDAY OFF									
SHIFT 1	6A/2P	1 OFF PER DAY		SGT SAT/SUN				0600	8
	SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT	0700	8
1	OFF	OFF						0800	8
2		OFF	OFF					0900	8
3			OFF	OFF				1000	10
4				OFF	OFF			1100	10
5					OFF	OFF		1200	10
6						OFF	OFF	1300	10
7	OFF						OFF	1400	10
8	OFF						OFF	1500	12
MINIMUM	4	5	5	5	5	5	4	1600	12
SHIFT 2	2P/10P	1 OFF PER DAY		SGT FRI/SAT				1700	12
	SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT	1800	11
1	OFF	OFF						1900	11
2		OFF	OFF					2000	11
3			OFF	OFF				2100	11
4				OFF	OFF			2200	11
5					OFF	OFF		2300	10
6						OFF	OFF	0000	10
7	OFF						OFF	0100	10
MINIMUM	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	0200	10
SHIFT 3	10P6A	1 OFF PER DAY		SGT FRI/SAT				0300	7
	SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT	0400	7
1	OFF	OFF						0500	7
2		OFF	OFF						MINIMUM
3			OFF	OFF					PER HOUR
4				OFF	OFF				
5					OFF	OFF			
6						OFF	OFF		
7	OFF						OFF	OFF	
MINIMUM	4	4	4	4	4	4	4		
SHIFT 4/5 A		SHIFT 4/5 B							
	SGT	SGT	FLEX SGT		SGT	SGT			
	1 OFF	1 OFF	SU/MO/TU		1 OFF	1 OFF			
	0600/1800	1500/0300	EVERY OTHER WED		0600/1800	1500/0300			
	0600/1800	1500/0300			0600/1800	1500/0300	TOTAL		50
	0600/1800	1500/0300			0600/1800	1500/0300			OFFICERS
	0600/1800	1800/0600			0600/1800	1800/0600			
	0600/1800	1800/0600			0600/1800	1800/0600			
	1000/2200	1800/0600			1000/2200	1800/0600			
	1000/2200	1800/0600			1000/2200	1800/0600			
MINIMUM	6	6			6	6			