

**The Bill Blackwood  
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**Benefits of a Career Development Program**

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**An Administrative Research Paper  
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## **ABSTRACT**

The El Paso County Sheriff's Office currently does not have a "Career Development Program" regulating the rotation or assignment of supervisory personnel. The purpose of this research is to answer the question: Is there a need and are there benefits of a program that promotes career development within law enforcement agencies? The results of this research project were gathered through the use of law enforcement and business management books, articles, journals and a written questionnaire.

It was found that career development involves a planned development and movement of managers where they are trained by systematically moving them to key assignments so they may receive additional work experience and further expand their supervisory skills. Of those Law Enforcement supervisors surveyed, the majority were in favor of job rotation and in addition, preferred to choose a career path best suited for them. All supervisors surveyed unanimously favored a formal selection process with defined selection criteria where they could equally compete for a vacant position. These findings are relevant because those agencies that do implement a "Career Development program" will develop more qualified and well rounded supervisors.

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## **INTRODUCTION**

The El Paso County Sheriff's Office currently does not have a "Career Development Program" regulating the rotation or assignment of supervisory personnel. Command personnel often make the appointments of supervisors arbitrarily. This subjective type of system limits the ability of a supervisor to select a career path most suited or desired by that individual. It is not uncommon for certain supervisors to stay in a position for excessive amounts of time, which prohibits the opportunity for other supervisors to compete for these positions. When this occurs, supervisors holding the position may become too complacent in their duties and responsibilities thus resulting in the stagnation of a section or division. A competitive job selection process will result in a candidate obtaining a position based on aptitude, merit, and job performance, and not solely on popularity. This research project is important to law enforcement agencies that do not currently have a policy or program that addresses periodic job rotation and a competitive selection process.

The purpose of this research is to answer the question: Is there a need and are there benefits of a program that promotes career development within law enforcement agencies? Once the recommended duration of assignments has expired, supervisors can benefit by being provided an equal opportunity to compete for any position. The methodology of this research will include a variety of sources. Several law enforcement and business management books, articles and journals will be utilized. In addition, first line and mid-level supervisors from the El Paso County Sheriff's Office and other law enforcement agencies will be surveyed.

It is anticipated that this research will find that a “Career Development Program” can result in an agency having better trained and well rounded supervisors. Officers that experience career mobility would not be confined to one specific law enforcement operation. Opportunities to compete for and obtain positions in patrol, administration, special operations, or investigations would be available. It is further expected that improved supervisory morale could be a result of having a “Career Development Program”.

The intent of this research project is to demonstrate to the command and administrative staff of the El Paso County Sheriff’s Office the need for a “Career Development Program” that will create an objective, effective, and impartial employee selection and assignment process. It is also intended to demonstrate the need for career development for command or administrative staff of other law enforcement agencies that presently have no program.

## **REVIEW OF LITERATURE**

In the world of big business, if a company wishes to be successful and prosper, efforts need be made to better develop their supervisors (Journal of European Industrial Training, 1984). However, most police organizations do not share this idea of supervisor development. According to the Journal of European Industrial Training (1984), “little guidance exists to indicate how police organizations develop their officers as persons capable of managing other policemen, budgets, short term crises and long-term issues” (p.4). The implementation of a “Career Development Program” that would include job rotation and job assignments based on a competitive selection process would be beneficial to development and growth of police agencies.

“Career Development is defined as a personnel management system that utilizes the human resources of the organization in the most efficient and effective manner possible” (Swank & Conser, 1983, pp. 285-286). “Career Development is the planned development and movement of employees throughout an organization” (Kraft & Blankenship, 1983, p. iv). In addition to the basic training that is received by supervisory personnel, there is a need for police agencies to provide further training for their officers and, in addition, make available opportunities that would allow them to further develop their supervisory abilities (Moore & Stevens, 1991). An effective way to train and develop supervisors is through job rotation.

Job rotation is a way of training managers and supervisors by systematically moving them to key jobs or assignments so they may familiarize themselves with the various functions of the police agency and further expand their supervisory skills (Moore & Stephens, 1991). According to Hill (1965), “Job rotation is an established method of providing a broader range of experience for supervisory and managerial personnel to help qualify them for increased responsibilities” (p. 46). It provides the supervisor the ability to network with members of other divisions or sections and provides the supervisor with an overall understanding on how the police agency functions (Moore & Stevens, 1991).

Issues may arise with work production if there is no workplace job rotation. According to Roseman (1977), once an employee knows everything there is to know about a job, the job may seem dull to the employee. Because over time when a job becomes monotonous, the employee no longer has the same drive or motivation he originally had when he first learned the job. The excitement of completing his work is

gone because there is nothing new for the employee to learn. Work should be fulfilling and challenge one's intellect because if it does not, the same effort will not be put forth and as a result, job productivity may suffer. In addition, officers assigned to a stressful assignment (e.g. Narcotics) should also be considered for rotation because exposure to extremely stressful assignments may affect an officer's job performance (Raub & Paterson, 1983).

There are those that may disagree with job rotation in police agencies. According to Daniels (2001), employees who burn out should not be rotated to a new job assignment because if this employee possesses an attitude problem in his current assignment it will still remain an issue in their new assignment. Daniels (2001) suggested that burn out is the result of no positive reward by a manager on a daily basis. He believes that an employee will work to achieve their goal if they receive positive praise for a job well done daily (Daniels, 2001). Frequent job rotation may also cause additional stress on an employee (Journal of European Industrial Training, 1984). According to those surveyed in the "Middle Ranking Police Officers' Management Development Survey", several employees disapproved of being frequently rotated. After becoming familiar with a position, they were forced to rotate to another position requiring them to learn a new task and become accustomed to working with a new supervisor (Journal of European Industrial Training, 1984).

In the words of Kellogg (1972), "If an employee has been on his job longer than five or ten years, he might be earmarked for a serious discussion about possible changes in responsibilities. . . ." (p. 55). Based on the results of study by Raub and Paterson (1983), a police department on average invests about six months of training

on an employee for a new position. According to Raub and Paterson (1983), an employee must remain in a position or assignment long enough for a police department's training investment in the employee to pay off. Therefore Raub and Paterson (1983), recommends that any employee remain a position for at least five years because the Department, through the employees work product, will have gotten its money's worth on its training investment. However positions involving extensive or specialized training should not be rotated (Raub & Peterson, 1983). When job rotation is made throughout a department, it should be done in a gradual manner that does not adversely effect Department operations (Graham & Cameron, 1985). In other words, all department supervisors should not be moved at the same time. The rotation of job assignments should equally effect all department divisions, which will allow those being moved to have the opportunity to be moved to other divisions (Graham & Cameron, 1985). According to Graham and Cameron (1985), once an employee is moved to a division, they should be rotated to other sections or cross-trained within their assigned division to further develop their job expertise.

In the words of Bopp (1974), "Civil service has almost no authority over lateral movement (transfers) within the police department" (p. 74). As a result, job transfers or job rotation may be used as a mechanism to "reward" or "discipline" an employee without any competitive selection process (Bopp, 1974, p. 74). This type of job rotation may restrict a supervisor's opportunity to compete for a vacant position, which may result in the best or most qualified employee not getting a position (Graham & Cameron, 1985).



Graham and Cameron (1985) proposed “a procedure for a fair and equitable selection process” (pp. 29-31). This process utilizes the following procedures:

- 1) Notice of position available
- 2) Memos of Interest and resumes
- 3) Performance evaluations
- 4) Oral Interview
- 5) Qualification board (Graham & Cameron, 1985, p. 29-31)

Under this process by Graham and Cameron (1985), once a position becomes available, the posting of an announcement allows any interested supervisor to apply. A “memorandum of interest and/ or resume” is generally the method for application. Performance evaluations are valuable tools because an employee’s past performance will usually indicate how an employee will perform in the future. With the addition of an oral interview, the most qualified applicant is ideally selected (Graham & Cameron, 1985).

## **METHODOLOGY**

The purpose of this research is to answer the question: Is there a need and are there benefits of a program that promotes career development within law enforcement agencies? Once the recommended duration of assignments has expired, supervisors can benefit by being provided an equal opportunity to compete for any position. It is anticipated that this research will find that a “Career Development Program” can result in a law enforcement agency having better trained and well rounded supervisors. Officers that experience career rotation would not be limited to one specific law enforcement operation or type of assignment. Supervisors would benefit by being able to compete for and obtain positions in patrol, administration, investigations, or special

operations. It can be further expected that improved supervisory morale could be a result of a "Career Development Program."

The measurement method for this research is a written questionnaire. The groups focused upon for the survey were first line and mid-level supervisors with The El Paso County Sheriff's Office (Lieutenants and Sergeants). These supervisors were assigned to patrol, investigations, administration and special operations. Those surveyed with other Texas law enforcement agencies held the rank of Captain, Lieutenant, Sergeant, and Investigators. These supervisors were assigned to patrol, administration and investigations. Those other Texas law enforcement agencies surveyed ranged from being very small in size to very large in size.

A total of twenty questionnaires were obtained from Lieutenants and Sergeants of The El Paso County Sheriff's Office. All those asked to complete the survey chose to do so. There are a total of eighteen Sergeants and seven Lieutenants in The El Paso County Sheriff's Office. Captains within the El Paso Sheriff's Office were not surveyed due to the fact their rank was obtained through appointment by the Sheriff. The written questionnaire was sent to a supervisor in twenty-nine different law enforcement agencies throughout Texas by electronic mail and fourteen responded.

When analyzing the obtained information, the responses on the questionnaires from supervisors from The El Paso County Sheriff's Office, which has no career development program, will be compared to those responses from other Texas law enforcement agencies. Based on questionnaire responses, the major issues and/ or problems with how their departments rotate and assign personnel will be identified. Also identified will be what selection criteria the respondents to the questionnaire believe

need be established when selecting a supervisor for assignment. Also analyzed will be the responses regarding how morale is affected by a department's system for job rotation and personnel assignments and if the respondents are currently working in their ideal work assignment.

## FINDINGS

After evaluating the written questionnaires completed by twenty supervisors from The El Paso County Sheriff's Office, it was discovered that 75% of these supervisors did not participate in any selection process to obtain their most recent assignment (Not rank). This percentage was significant when compared to the fourteen other Texas law enforcement agencies that were surveyed. Only 29% of supervisors in these other law enforcement agencies failed to go through a selection process to obtain their most recent assignment (Table I).

**Table I**

Comparison of Supervisors who participated in a selection process for their current assignments

	<b>El Paso Sheriff's Office</b>	<b>Other State Law Enforcement Agencies</b>
<b>Selection process</b>	5 (25%)	10 (71%)
<b>No Selection process</b>	15 (75%)	4 (29%)

Of the supervisors surveyed from the El Paso Sheriff's Office, 75% were assigned to patrol, 15% to criminal investigations, 5% to special operations and 5% to administration. When asked if these supervisors were in their ideal job assignment, only 25% responded that they were. This is significant when compared to the other fourteen law enforcement agencies surveyed. Of the supervisors surveyed from fourteen

different law enforcement agencies, 64% were assigned to patrol, 14% to patrol administration, 14% to administration and 7% to criminal investigations. However, 64% of the supervisors from these other agencies claimed that they were in their ideal job assignment. Of those 75% supervisors from the El Paso Sheriff's Office that were not in their ideal assignment, it was apparent that they preferred to be assigned to criminal investigations or special operations (Table 2). To further emphasize this point, when supervisors were asked if they would prefer to choose their own career path, 70% of the El Paso Sheriff's Office supervisors favored this. Of those who favored a career path, 79% preferred an investigation career path. The results with the other law enforcement agencies were similar with 71% of the supervisors being in favor of choosing a career path and of those that approved, 60% would prefer to work investigations.

**TABLE 2**

Preferred job assignments of El Paso County Sheriff's Office supervisors currently not assigned to their ideal job assignment

Preferred assignments	Number of Supervisors
Special Operations	5
Criminal Investigations	7
Administration	2
Patrol	1

When examining the issue of job rotation, 90% of supervisors with The El Paso Sheriff's Office were in favor of job rotation. In reviewing the results from the other law enforcement agencies, 71% of supervisors also favored job rotation. Based on the surveys, over half of the El Paso Sheriff's Office agreed that job rotation should occur after three years. The other agencies were equally preferred three and five year rotations (Table 3).

**TABLE 3**

Preferred job rotation frequency by El Paso Sheriff's Office supervisors versus other agencies supervisors

<i>Job rotation frequency</i>	<i>El Paso Sheriff's Supervisors</i>	<i>Other agencies supervisors</i>
<b>Every year</b>	0	0
<b>2 years</b>	2	2
<b>3 years</b>	11	3
<b>4 years</b>	3	0
<b>2 years</b>	2	3
<b>5 –10 years</b>	0	1

According to the survey results, 90% of The El Paso County Sheriff's Office supervisors believed the current system for job rotation and personnel assignments was not suitable. In addition, 85% of supervisors from the El Paso Sheriff's Office believed the current system for job rotation and personnel selection decreased office morale. When surveying the other fourteen agencies, 57% agreed that the current system for job rotation and personnel assignments in their agencies was not suitable. Also, only 47% of supervisors from the other agencies believed their current system reduced morale.

As previously discussed, the majority of supervisors with the El Paso County Sheriff's Office viewed the office's job rotation and personnel selection as not being suitable and thus adversely effecting morale. It is relevant to review the issues or problems these supervisors have identified with the job rotation or personnel selection process. Their responses were as follows:

- "Good old boy system and alliance system is predominant". (Anonymous participant of survey, Jan/2005)
- "Sometimes assignments are filled with personnel that lack experience in that capacity. Sometimes the same personnel get rotated within the same area, not

allowing others the opportunity to learn something else”. (Anonymous participant of survey, Jan/2005)

- “Current system smacks of Favoritism. Some get moved around to perceived better jobs (CID, Administration, special operations) while others stay stuck in perceived lesser jobs (Patrol)”. (Anonymous participant of survey, Jan/2005)
- “Most transfers are done as a punishment, friendship or favor and not a career move” (Anonymous participant of survey, Jan/2005)
- “The current system seems to display selection based on factors other than knowledge, experience, seniority or performance appraisals”. (Anonymous participant of survey, Jan/2005)

In reviewing their comments, it is apparent that there is no set process for personnel selection or job rotation used in the El Paso County Sheriff’s Office. This may result in the most qualified applicant not getting chosen for a vacant position. The same individuals may also stay in the same position for an indefinite amount of time.

After the surveys were reviewed, 100% of the supervisors surveyed from the El Paso County Sheriff’s Office and the fourteen other law enforcement agencies were in favor of a formal selection process for vacant positions. These supervisors surveyed were then asked to identify the most effective criteria for personnel selection. Of the twenty surveyed from the El Paso County Sheriff’s Office, 80% were in favor of a request for transfer, 75% favored the use of oral interviews, 75% favored the use of attendance records, and 70% favored the use of disciplinary records. Of the fourteen supervisors surveyed from other agencies, 79% favored an oral interview, 71% favored the use of disciplinary records, 64% favored the use of attendance records, and 57% were in favor of request for transfer (Table 4).

**TABLE 4**

Preferred criteria for personnel selection by El Paso Sheriff's Office supervisors versus other agencies supervisors

Selection criteria	El Paso Sheriff's Office (20)	Other agencies (14)
Request for transfer	16 (80%)	8 (57%)
Oral interview	15 (75%)	11 (79%)
Written exam	2 (10%)	3 (21%)
Attendance records	15 (75%)	9 (64%)
Disciplinary records	14 (70%)	10 (71%)
Performance evaluations	7 (35%)	7 (50%)
Assessment center	1 (5%)	4 (29%)
Experience/ background	3 (15%)	1 (7%)

After reviewing the results of the survey, it is apparent that both the El Paso County Sheriff's Office and the other fourteen law enforcement agencies agreed on what criteria were the most important for personnel selection. They agreed that a request for transfer, oral interview, and the use of attendance and disciplinary records were the most important criteria.

## **CONCLUSION**

The El Paso County Sheriff's Office currently has no "Career Development Program" regulating the rotation or assignment of supervisory personnel. Command personnel often make the appointments of supervisors arbitrarily. The purpose of this research was to answer the question: Is there a need and are there benefits of a program that promotes career development within law enforcement agencies?

This research project is important to law enforcement agencies that do not have a policy or program that addresses periodic job rotation and a competitive selection process. It was anticipated that this research would find that a "Career Development Program" could result in a law enforcement agency having better trained and well

rounded supervisors. It was further expected that improved supervisory morale could be a result of having a "Career Development Program".

Based on the research conducted by the use of historical literature and through the use of a written questionnaire, these research findings did in fact support the anticipated findings or hypothesis. According to Kraft and Blankenship (1983), "Career Development is the planned development and movement of employees throughout an organization" (p. IV). There are benefits to a career development program that uses job rotation and formal personnel selection process. Job rotation is a way of training managers and supervisors by systematically moving them to key jobs or assignments so they may familiarize themselves with the various functions of the police agency and further expand their supervisory skills (Moore & Stephens, 1991). Hill (1965) contended that by utilizing job rotation, supervisors become more experienced and better prepared for career advancement. Roseman (1977) asserted that if supervisors are not rotated over time, the position they hold becomes dull or "monotonous" for them. Their position may have lost its excitement because there is nothing new to learn. As a result, a supervisor's work product may be affected if his intellect is not challenged.

According to Raub and Paterson (1983), he believed job rotation should occur for most assignments after a five year period, except for those positions requiring significant or specialized training, because an agency by that time will have received a fair return on their training investment. The supervisors surveyed from the other agencies were equally divided between a three and five year rotation period for supervisors. After reviewing the results of the surveys from the supervisors from the El Paso Sheriff's Office it was evident that they were in favor of a rotation every three



years. Only non-supervisory officers within The El Paso Sheriff's Office generally receive specialized training, which requires a significant fiscal investment. Due to the fact that El Paso Sheriff's Office supervisors serve only as managers for these employees, a three year rotation period for supervisors is feasible.

Based on the findings of the research, it was also determined that because The El Paso Sheriff's Office has no job rotation or competitive personnel selection process for vacant positions, only 25% of those supervisors surveyed were currently in their preferred job assignment. Of all the supervisors surveyed, which included supervisors from the other police agencies, the majority wanted to choose their own career path. Those within the El Paso Sheriff's Office who were unable to select a career path or have an equal opportunity to compete for a position revealed that they had a decrease in their morale as a result. They believed that their Office utilized a "good old boy" system of personnel selection where those that are favored obtain and keep the most desired positions. The consensus was that personnel selection for vacant positions were not always filled by the most qualified of experienced applicant.

Those supervisors surveyed unanimously favored a formal selection process where they could equally compete for a vacant position. It was agreed that the following selection criteria should be utilized when filling vacant positions:

- 1) Request for transfer
- 2) Oral interview
- 3) Attendance records
- 4) Disciplinary record

These selection criteria were consistent with those recommended by Graham and Cameron (1985). Based on the findings, the use of these criteria during a personnel

selection process should yield a system that places the most qualified applicant in a vacant position.

These findings are relevant to law enforcement agencies because those agencies that do implement a career development program that includes job rotation and competitive job selection will develop more qualified and well rounded supervisors. Supervisors will have improved morale when provided the opportunity to choose a career path and are afforded the opportunity to compete for any position. It is perceivable that other officers may also benefit by the implementation of a career development program. Periodic movement will give an employee the opportunity to become well rounded, develop professionally, and in turn be better adapted to serve the community.

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Sons.

## APPENDIX

### Leadership Command College Administrative Research Project Career Development Program Survey

1) What is your current rank? \_\_\_\_\_ Sergeant \_\_\_\_\_ Lieutenant \_\_\_\_\_ Captain  
Length of time of current rank: \_\_\_\_\_ years

2) How long have you been in your present job assignment? \_\_\_\_\_ years

3) Did you participate in any selection process to obtain your current assignment (Not rank)?  
\_\_\_\_\_ YES \_\_\_\_\_ NO

If yes please mark those that apply: \_\_\_\_\_ Oral interview  
\_\_\_\_\_ Request for transfer  
\_\_\_\_\_ Written examination  
\_\_\_\_\_ Assessment Center  
\_\_\_\_\_ Other- Explain \_\_\_\_\_

4) In which Division are you presently assigned : \_\_\_\_\_ Jail  
\_\_\_\_\_ Patrol  
\_\_\_\_\_ Criminal Investigations  
\_\_\_\_\_ Special Operations / Narcotics  
\_\_\_\_\_ Administration

5) Are you currently assigned in your "ideal" job assignment? \_\_\_\_\_ Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No

If no, what Division would you ideally prefer to be assigned:

\_\_\_\_\_ Jail  
\_\_\_\_\_ Patrol  
\_\_\_\_\_ Criminal Investigations  
\_\_\_\_\_ Special Operations/ Narcotics  
\_\_\_\_\_ Administration

6) Do you agree that job assignments should be periodically rotated? \_\_\_\_\_ Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No

If yes, how often? \_\_\_\_\_ Every year  
\_\_\_\_\_ every 2 years  
\_\_\_\_\_ every 3 years  
\_\_\_\_\_ every 4 years  
\_\_\_\_\_ every 5 years  
\_\_\_\_\_ every 5-10 years

7) Would you be in favor of a Career Development system which would allow you to choose a **Patrol** career path or a **Investigations** career path. \_\_\_\_\_ Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No

If yes which career path would you choose \_\_\_\_\_ Patrol \_\_\_\_\_ Investigations

8) What is your ultimate (long term) career goal:

- \_\_\_\_\_ Jail w/ an increase in rank
- \_\_\_\_\_ Patrol w/ an increase in rank
- \_\_\_\_\_ Criminal Investigations w/ an increase in rank
- \_\_\_\_\_ Administration w/ an increase in rank
- \_\_\_\_\_ Special Operations/ Narcotics w/ an increase in rank
- \_\_\_\_\_ Stay in same Division w/ your current rank
- \_\_\_\_\_ Jail w/ your current rank
- \_\_\_\_\_ Patrol w/ your current rank
- \_\_\_\_\_ Criminal Investigations w/ your current rank
- \_\_\_\_\_ Administration w/ your current rank
- \_\_\_\_\_ Special Operations/ Narcotics w/ your current rank

9) What is the highest rank to which you aspire to achieve?

- \_\_\_\_\_ Sergeant
- \_\_\_\_\_ Lieutenant
- \_\_\_\_\_ Captain
- \_\_\_\_\_ Chief Deputy or Assistant Chief
- \_\_\_\_\_ Sheriff or Chief of Police

10) Please list the number of moves and to what Divisions you would aspire to be moved to before reaching your ultimate career goal.

Number of moves \_\_\_\_\_ Divisions \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

11) Please state if you agree or disagree with the following statement "The current system the Department utilizes for job rotation and personnel assignments is suitable."

- \_\_\_\_\_ Strongly agree
- \_\_\_\_\_ Agree
- \_\_\_\_\_ Strongly disagree
- \_\_\_\_\_ Disagree

12) Please state if you agree or disagree with the following statement “ The current system the Department utilizes for job rotation and personnel assignments decreases Department moral”.

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Strongly disagree
- Disagree

13) Please discuss the major issues and any problems with how the Department currently rotates and assigns personnel.

14) Which of the following listed below do you believe the Department should utilize to select personnel for an assignment (Not rank)? You may list more than one

- Oral Interview
- Request for transfer
- Written examination
- Assessment Center
- Attendance record
- Disciplinary record
- Educational
- Other \_\_\_\_\_

15) Would you be in favor of a formal selection process where all qualified personnel are allowed to equally compete for a vacant position?

- Yes
- No

**If with an Agency other than The El Paso County Sheriff’s Office**, please describe the system currently in place with your Department with regards to personnel assignments and job rotation (Not promotion).