

**The Bill Blackwood
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Moving Forward with Field Training Officer Programs

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ABSTRACT

The Reno Model Police Training Officer (PTO) program is a new and innovative type of field training program that addresses leadership development at the earliest stages of an officers career. The PTO program integrates problem based learning and problem-solving techniques, which appeal to the newer generations of officers by allowing them to have greater input into their training. Additionally, the PTO program focuses on some community oriented policing techniques.

Law enforcement should move forward to the Reno Model Police Training Officer (PTO) Program and away from the San Jose Field Training Officer (FTO) model. Departments have the opportunity to implement the Reno Model PTO program in order to respond to changing generational attitudes and public expectations. Although the field training programs have remained the same, the field of law enforcement, the new generations of police officers entering the profession, and the society that law enforcement serves has changed dramatically. Police departments can no longer afford to ignore progressive field training opportunities. The Reno PTO model has been adopted globally, with programs in Canada and Africa as well as numerous departments across the nation (Hoover, 2006).

Research for support of this paper was based on a review of articles, published papers, Internet sites, law enforcement periodicals, and the Reno Model Program itself. Counter position papers were also examined and presented in order to further support the need for change.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
Abstract	
Introduction	1
Counter Position	2
Position	3
Conclusion/Recommendation	8
References	10

INTRODUCTION

Moving forward with field training officer programs addresses the pervasive attitude of law enforcement which resists change when it comes to the training of new recruits. The importance of an effective field training program is to establish a training connection for new police officers in order to bridge the gap between academy graduation and patrolling the streets. A model program provides new officers with the tools they need to accomplish the job as well as provides liability protection for departments with regard to training.

The San Jose Model Field Training Officer (FTO) programs usually consist of one to two weeks of the recruit sitting and observing while the FTO demonstrates his competencies in the areas that the recruit will soon be evaluated in. The premise of this method is that the recruit should be able to watch and then emulate the FTO when it is time for the recruit to handle calls and demonstrate his abilities. These FTO programs also use daily observation report forms that record the new recruit's abilities based on a Likert scale of one through seven. These evaluations are utilized to pass a recruit out of training and into the field or to remove a recruit from training, which usually results in termination from the department. These daily evaluations do not address an individual's learning style, adult-learning methods, problem-based learning, problem solving abilities, or community oriented policing (Walker, 2005).

While the Reno Model Police Training Officer program (PTO) bears many similarities to the San Jose Model FTO program, there are some very important fundamental differences. The San Jose Model focuses on behavior modification of the trainee, but the Reno Model addresses problem solving and adult-learning

methodology. The trainee has more input in the Reno Model and helps direct his/her training. This approach improves the relationship between the trainee and the trainer and makes the entire training experience less antagonistic. The Reno Model PTO program places emphasis on leadership. Leadership development has become an integral part of law enforcement today, and with the Reno Model, it begins at the earliest stages of an officer's career. Emphasis is also placed on problem solving and ethics. According to The Hoover Group of Reno (2006), the Reno Model PTO program was developed in response to modern police trainers requests. It addresses the changing needs of today's police officers.

Law enforcement should move forward to the Reno Model Police Training Officer (PTO) program and away from the San Jose FTO model. This program has the ability to meet the needs of law enforcement and the expectations of the community as well as address the needs, changing attitudes, and learning differences of new generations of police officers.

COUNTER POSITION

Proponents of the San Jose Model Field Training Officer program assert there is no need to change from the widely used program to any other training program. They contend that the San Jose Model FTO program, which was developed over 30 years ago in response to a tragic accident involving a poorly trained police recruit and has remained virtually unchanged since 1971, is still effective (Hugghins, 2005). According to Hugghins (2005), approximately 75% to 84% of law enforcement agencies utilize a field training program based on the San Jose FTO program. Hugghins (2005) found, "...81% of the agencies that use the San Jose Model as a basis for their field

training program stated that their program did effectively meet the needs of newly hired officers or recruits” (p. 11). The question that must then be asked is whether the program effectively meets the needs of the community as well as the officers. Additionally, Huggins’ (2005) research indicated that approximately 35% of law enforcement agencies surveyed either do not use a field training program based on the San Jose model or feel that their San Jose model based program was ineffective.

POSITION

The philosophy of law enforcement has changed tremendously over the last 30 years. There are ever-increasing community demands and expectations placed on police officers and police departments that did not exist in the past. Society no longer accepts law enforcement organizations that operate without regard for what the citizens want. As a result, the Community Oriented Policing and Problem-Solving (COPPS) model was developed. The Community Oriented Policing philosophy encourages officers to concentrate on community specific problems and find ways to solve those problems, thereby improving the relationship between the police department and the community. The Reno Model Police Training Program emphasizes the Community Oriented Policing philosophy through an approach to training that focuses on problem solving and problem-based learning (Chappell, Lanza-Kaduce, & Johnston, 2008).

In the beginning, the Reno Model was developed as a tool for community policing to assist police department administrators in developing a formalized COPPS program. It was discovered, through its development, that it could be an effective training program and was adaptable for any law enforcement agency, including dispatch, fish and game law enforcement, and corrections (Hoover, 2006).

A training program based on the COPPS model allows for trainees and officers to seek long-term solutions and implement those solutions as opposed to merely enforcing the law. According to Walker (2005), most law enforcement instructors and administrators have one primary concern with the San Jose Field Training Model. The San Jose Model forces departments to continue to utilize old policing standards to train new generations of police officers in a modern society.

The Reno Model PTO program originated with a grant from the U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Community Oriented Policing Services in order to develop a new community oriented policing program. The research for this program continued from 1999 to 2001 as law enforcement organizations across the nation and Canada were surveyed. It was ultimately discovered that this program, specifically developed for post-academy training, could be an effective field training program. While the core competencies of the training were similar to traditional field training, the methodologies of incorporating problem solving, critical thinking, leadership, and problem-based learning was unique to the Reno model. Additionally, it was discovered that due to the flexibility of the Reno model, it could be adapted to other agencies and divisions' needs, and it has an unlimited potential for modification to meet the ever-changing needs of law enforcement (Pitts, Glensor, & Peak, 2007).

Other changes to law enforcement involve the recruits themselves. The new generations of officers are not satisfied with merely emulating their training officers and are demanding to be more involved in their own training. Because recruit training is the first actual encounter with real police work that many new hires have, it is important for that training to be relevant, not only to law enforcement but to the trainee as well. If

trainees are not satisfied with their training or the training methodologies, they will seek other professions. According to Grant (2008), only 3% of Generation Y would consider law enforcement as a career, 63% would never consider a career in police work, and 34% are undecided. Law enforcement faces a continually diminishing hiring pool. The percentage of those undecided are those that law enforcement must attract in order to continue to provide communities with adequate service. With that in mind, police administrators must know what the new generation wants. Generation Y wants many things that differ from the previous generations. What is important to law enforcement administrators and to training is what police departments can give them. Grant (2008) asserted that Generation Y wants their opinions considered and taken seriously. They want coaches as opposed to bosses or trainers, they need to feel appreciated and valued as employees and members of the community, and they want variety.

The Hoover Group (2006) stated, "The Reno Model incorporates adult learning methodology as the foundation for its learning philosophy. While the San Jose Model was capable of adapting adult learning practices, it was not designed as such; rather it was based on behavior modification" (p. 5). According to The Hoover Group of Reno (2006), the Reno Model incorporates all adult learning principals rather than focusing on a single method such as problem-based learning. Incorporating problem solving and problem-based learning directly relates to the differences between the older generations and new generations.

According to Chappell, Lanza-Kaduce, and Johnston (2004), community oriented policing is most effective when training occurs using adult learning. Through an adult-learning methodology, the trainees' life experiences and interactions are emphasized.

The instructor's role changes to that of coach and mentor assisting the trainee in developing problem solving skills, critical thinking, and creativity. The adult-learning approach is the polar opposite of the traditional paramilitary style of teaching.

The generations of today demand to be given responsibility early on in their careers. They are not content to merely watch and emulate what they are shown but rather choose to develop their own methods. In today's society, most recruits come from families where both parents worked, and as a result, they have become problem solvers. Lee (2008) contended, "If you give them the resources, support, and freedom they need to get the job done, they will do so in some very innovative ways. This is also consistent with many of the goals of community policing where we emphasize problem-solving skills" (p. 1). The Reno Model PTO program encourages innovative thinking and problem solving through the use of a neighborhood portfolio exercise that allows the recruit to identify a community problem, develop a workable solution, and see the problem through to fruition. Ayers (2001) noted, "Generation X and Y want jobs that provide meaning in their lives, where they can make a difference, rather than those that just mean a big paycheck" (p. 5).

Because the Reno Model relies heavily on Bloom's Taxonomy, three types of learning, and incorporates adult learning methodologies directly into the training program, trainers are better prepared to address the different types of training needs for recruits and more effectively evaluate the trainees. Additionally, this allows the trainer to tailor the training to meet the needs of the individual recruit. According to Fischer (2006), when a recruit experiences a training environment that is professional,

supportive, and focuses on safety and learning, their level of training and enthusiasm is a benefit to the department, both professionally and financially.

Finally, the most significant change in the approach to field training programs is the role of leadership development. Leadership development has become an integral part of law enforcement today, and with the Reno Model, it begins at the earliest stages of an officer's career. Emphasis is placed on problem solving and ethics. Today's society expects and demands more of their police officers. Future progressive leaders who learn the importance of problem solving, critical thinking, and ethics are better equipped to address and meet the challenges of rapidly changing dynamics of law enforcement and society (Hoover, 2006).

According to The Hoover Group (2006), today's society and communities expect leadership at all levels of a police department. No longer does society insist on leadership solely from the chief of police. Members of the community anticipate that responding officers are capable of intelligently answering questions and solving presented problems without seeking advice from further up the chain of command. Additionally, officers are held to a higher standard of service today than in the past.

The Reno Model provides problem-based learning, problem solving skills, critical thinking skills, and ethics training. These skill sets are imperative as effective future leaders. According to Pitts, et al. (2008), it appeared that Reno Model PTO trained recruits have problem solving skills normally associated with more experienced officers. Additionally, those officers trained in the PTO program demonstrated greater leadership potential. It has also been observed that PTO trained officers are better able to form partnerships within the community to address crime and specific concerns. The Reno

Model PTO program is specifically designed to prepare recruits for policing modern society with enhanced knowledge, skills, and abilities.

CONCLUSION/RECOMMENDATION

Today's society demands community oriented officers with special problem solving and critical thinking skills. Recruits demand to be more involved in their training and are not satisfied or willing to accept the status quo. The Reno PTO model has been adopted globally with programs in Canada and Africa as well as numerous departments across the nation (Hoover, 2006). Field training programs must change and move forward to the Reno Police Training Officer Model.

To improve field training programs throughout the state of Texas, the Texas Commission of Law Enforcement Standards and Education (TCLEOSE) should review the Reno Police Training Officer Model and adopt it as the officially accepted field training program for the state of Texas. The Reno Model has been tested and implemented successfully in all areas of law enforcement to include corrections, communications, and fish and wildlife departments. According to The Hoover Group (2006), the Reno Model was awarded the Most Innovative Practice distinction by the COPPS Office in 2002 as well as the Champions of Industry Award for Progressive Industry Practice by Pat Summerall Productions for innovation in government in 2003.

The San Jose Field Training Program is antiquated and does not address the current demands of the public and law enforcement. While many agencies currently using a San Jose FTO model have stated that the program effectively meets the needs of its department and officers (Huggins, 2005), there is no evidence to indicate that it is meeting the needs or the demands of the community. Progressive thinking trainees will

not accept the current standards for training and will seek employment where they are more comfortable, feel they have input, and can be more involved in their own training experiences (Fischer, 2006). In order to excel as effective law enforcement administrators, it is important to acknowledge that the differences that exist between the baby boomer generation, generation x, and generation y are significant. To effectively lead and manage new officers, it is incumbent on administrators to become change agents instead of opposing and hindering change. For administrators to remain firmly fixed in the belief that new officers must change and adapt to the department and its traditions is a certain path to disaster for recruiting, retention, and community relations. The necessary changes must begin with the department and start at the beginning of a new officer's career and their experience during training. According to Lee (2008), it is imperative that today's administrators leave a legacy of having sculpted the transition between generations and improve the department and the profession.

The Reno Model PTO program is the most innovative field training program available to law enforcement today. Police departments have an opportunity to move away from a training program steeped in traditionalism and forward to a training program developed for the new generations and community expectations.

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