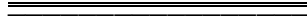


**The Bill Blackwood
Law Enforcement Management Institute of Texas**



Recruiting and Hiring Police Officers



**A Leadership White Paper
Submitted in Partial Fulfillment
Required for Graduation from the
Leadership Command College**



**By
Don Hyder III**

**Dallas Area Rapid Transit Police Department
Dallas, Texas
September 2022**

ABSTRACT

Law enforcement agencies in the United States are understaffed. Recruiting, hiring, and retaining personnel has become a significant challenge, resulting in longer work hours, a lack of resources to serve the community and longer call response times. Negative media attention, controversial law enforcement incidents, and antiquated recruiting processes have contributed to the shortage of police applicants.

These contemporary law enforcement issues call for different attracting, recruiting, and hiring practices of tomorrow's police force. Therefore, it is the position of the researcher that law enforcement agencies should consider innovative methods for recruiting the next generation of police personnel. Changes in recruiting strategies will require administrators to go beyond their standard recruiting comfort zones. This paper will inform the reader of essential processes that may attract applicants from the Baby Boomer Generations to Generation Z with technology and an innovative approach to advertising and branding the department's professional image.

This paper will also address methods for recruiting Generation Z in their early career development stage. This recruiting practice will significantly increase the organization's possibilities for hiring and filling vacant positions. Lastly, the researcher addresses the need to salvage marginal applicants who may not meet the minimum physical agility requirements by offering them an opportunity to train and develop the necessary skills to continue through the onboarding process.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
Abstract	
Introduction	1
Position	3
Counter Arguments	8
Recommendation	10
References	13

INTRODUCTION

One of the most significant issues resulting in disinterest in the law enforcement profession is the policing image. Law enforcement organizations are finding it difficult to recruit, hire and keep officers within their departments. These difficulties often present current police officers working longer hours, a lack of resources to serve the community, and longer call response times. According to Langham (2017), law enforcement at one time presented a stable career with attractive benefits, promotions, and a positive career image. Benefits, promotions, and the image within law enforcement have changed drastically over the past few years.

Public perception, approval of police practices, and police ability to serve with equity and fairness have resulted in distrust, criticism, and in some cases, public outrage. According to Asabor et al. (2020), there have been many police shootings since 2016. Many of these incidents were race or age-related. Other police-related incidents resulted in the fatal death of the suspect. Incidents of this nature have brought about the extreme controversy, distrust, and public outrage across the country.

The controversial incidents have sparked public distrust of law enforcement practices and gained significant media attention. With the vast amount of media coverage surrounding an array of controversy in police policy and procedures, the noble image of the law enforcement profession became the subject of intense scrutiny and retaliation. Law enforcement officers abroad were being ambushed, shot at, or assaulted. Many of the retaliatory tactics resulted in police officer deaths. According to Nichols (2017), there were approximately sixty-six law enforcement officers killed in 2016. Seventeen officers out of the sixty-six killed were ambushed during their daily

duties (Nichols, 2017). The public and media portrayal of distrust, disrespect, and disdain for law enforcement and the nobility of the profession has hampered the ability to attract quality and qualified applicants.

Diversity is another touchpoint that affects recruitment and hiring practices in law enforcement. Law enforcement agencies should consider diversity from an internal and external perspective. Externally speaking, the tension and distrust between marginal communities and police have worsened over time, and it challenges the ability to attract minority applicants (Rigaux & Cunningham, 2020). Citizens desire to see and engage law enforcement professionals that they can identify with working in their communities. Internally speaking, how officers view their departments have a significant impact on recruiting. Every employee should be a recruiter, sharing the positive intricacies of their agency (Perry, 2020). Law enforcement officers have varying ambitions and expectations. Ensuring diversity in rank, divisions, specialty units, and community programs are essential to officers' internal message about their department. Internal diversity has a direct impact on the external view of an organization. Internal perspectives play a significant role in the overall recruitment and hiring of qualified applicants.

Law enforcement agencies should also consider the generational diversity in the workforce. As of 2022, five generations are co-existing in the workforce, including Traditionalists, Baby Boomers, Generation X (Gen X), Generation Y (Millennials), and Generation Z (Gen Z) (Acheampong, 2020). To attract, recruit, and keep personnel in this multigenerational workforce, there must be an understanding of what motivates

each group's values and their needs, expectations, and preferences (Acheampong, 2020).

The Next Generation, Gen Z, is the youngest generation entering the workforce. According to Acheampong (2020), Generation Z was born in a digital era and had greater access to technology and social media platforms than earlier generations. There is a significant increase in technology and social media use as the generations progress from Boomers to Generation Z (Melendi, 2020). These contemporary law enforcement issues call for a different way of attracting, recruiting, and hiring tomorrow's police force. Therefore, law enforcement agencies should consider innovative methods for recruiting the next generation of police personnel.

POSITION

Anyone watching the daily news on television can see the challenges that law enforcement agencies across the nation face in terms of crime, community support, and staffing (Smith, 2016). The underlying issues are centered around re-establishing community trust and re-establishing the legitimacy of the law enforcement profession (Smith, 2016). The problems of legitimacy, transparency, and trust are universal amongst law enforcement. As a result, large and small agencies are experiencing a downturn in the number of people applying to become law enforcement officers. Law enforcement agencies should consider more innovative recruitment methods to change the tide and successfully bring in more applicants.

Technology has changed and has a significant effect on how people receive information. One of the reasons law enforcement organizations should emphasize the use of technology and social media platforms as part of their recruiting processes is that

it will increase their applicant pool and potential candidates. Using social media platforms is a great way to increase community engagement and recruit personnel (Police1, 2019). Social media is a medium that will give consistent organizational advertisements. Another essential reason organizations should use social media is to consistently highlight the many positive contributions within their community engagement and outreach programs. Social media will help organizations re-establish trust and legitimacy.

According to Police1 (2019), almost all adults use social media daily. About 67% of people from the ages of eighteen to twenty-nine use social media platforms like Facebook, Snapchat, or Instagram (Police1, 2019). Social media platforms such as Facebook, Neighborhood, Twitter, YouTube, and Instagram present a marketing concept that traditional marketing strategies cannot offer (Ziegler, 2020). Employers that conducted recruiting through social media saw a 49% increase in quality applicants (Ziegler, 2020). Seventy-three percent of employees between the ages of eighteen and thirty-four found their jobs through social media (Ziegler, 2020). Because law enforcement is not for everyone, when using social media as a recruitment tool, agencies must highlight specific details about their organization and what it truly means to work in a law enforcement environment (Sam, 2020).

Social media advertisements should also highlight the department's values, diversity, and expectations. Law enforcement agencies will be able to showcase the diversity it has within their ranks and specialized divisions. Social media advertisements should also display the law enforcement code of ethics and what it means to be a law enforcement professional in terms of the reward of serving and helping others. The use

of social media will attract applicants of varying generations and increase the number of applicants that genuinely want to be in law enforcement and serve others.

Although recruitment is different from selection, the purpose of recruiting is to attract potential applicants (Ellis et al., 2005). When it comes to selecting qualified applicants, many law enforcement organizations are experiencing many applicant disqualifications out of the limited number of people that apply for police jobs (Smith, 2016). According to research in an article titled *6 Strategies to Recruit a Stronger and More Diverse Police Force, by Bloomberg Cities* (2019), 20% of police applicants fail the physical agility part of the selection process. In many law enforcement organizations, the idea of lowering the standard for hiring personnel is often tossed around as a means of increasing their applicant pool. Law enforcement agencies do not have to lower their standards for selecting and accepting applicants; however, they can mitigate their disqualifying factors by implementing programs to help applicants through the areas of disqualification.

There have been a few law enforcement organizations in the United States to explore a boot camp-type program. Both Baltimore and Los Angeles police departments have adopted programs to salvage applicants that may fail the physical agility by marginal numbers (Bloomberg Cities, 2019). Law enforcement organizations should adopt a “boot camp” type program that will help them salvage applicants that do not pass the agility test by marginal numbers. Instead of lowering the standard, organizations can elevate their processes. When applicants know that organizations are willing to help them in their endeavors to become law enforcement professionals, they feel valued. These programs paint a positive perception that agencies value people and

want to help them succeed and diligently take steps to improve community expectations. The value placed in such a program may increase the applicant pool for selecting potential recruits.

The “boot camp” program is a process whereby organizations conduct fitness sessions with the applicants a few times per week to help them meet the standard and move to the next step in the hiring process (Bloomberg Cities, 2019). Conducting a boot camp may not only increase the number of applicants, but help agencies keep valuable applicants that would otherwise apply at another department or give up the idea of being in law enforcement altogether. Knowing that the organization took the time to help recruits succeed will bring value and loyalty to the program and department and increase retention rates as people feel the department values them.

Lastly, law enforcement agencies should consider recruiting at high schools. Recruiting at high schools has a twofold purpose. Recruitment at high schools that offer their students the possibility to graduate with an associate degree may have a more immediate recruitment and applicant selection process. According to the *Texas Commission on Law Enforcement Statutes and Rules Handbook (2020)*, a person can become a peace officer at the age of eighteen if they have an associate degree or at least 60 college hours. Again, this will increase the number of potential candidates available.

Law enforcement agencies can also recruit at high schools for a more long-term effect for hiring students that desire to go into law enforcement. According to the *Texas Commission on Law Enforcement Statutes and Rules Handbook (2020)*, a person can become a police officer at age 21 without an associate degree. Therefore, recruiting this

population and introducing them to a police explorer program as part of a development process for knowledge and entry into law enforcement will increase the organization's applicant pool.

The Explorer Program enables organizations to educate youth about police work, set up a police academy curriculum that will stimulate and encourage high school students to pursue a career in law enforcement (Bamberger, 2003). Some law enforcement organizations have adapted Explorer programs. The purpose of an Explorer program is to educate participants on law enforcement practices and policy. However, Explorer programs are also an ideal way to recruit and hire participants. Explorer participants that hire on to a police department are the prime candidates to become mentors to other youths aspiring to become law enforcement professionals (Bamberger, 2003). Another benefit of recruiting this group is that it gives organizations the ability to recruit, hire, and mold the next generation of police personnel early. Generation Z is the youngest generation in a generationally diverse work population (Acheampong, 2020). Law enforcement agencies must begin to embrace the idea and realize the need to employ Generations X, Y, and Z (Singh & Dangmei, n.d.).

It is crucial to understand and identify with the different values and work expectations of these younger generations. Law enforcement organizations must attract, connect with, train and groom them to become the law enforcement professionals of the future (Singh & Dangmei, n.d.). The use of visual technology will reach these generations in their world of technology and digital media.

COUNTER ARGUMENTS

One reason law enforcement organizations may not take an innovative approach to recruiting and hiring is a fear of giving in to this new paradigm of technology and social media. Many law enforcement executives, administrators, and veteran officers do not use social media. They fear the amount of technology that exists and resist using it even when they must. Traditionalists, Baby Boomers, and a large portion of Generation X did not grow up where technology was so advanced and widely used. One of the complaints of younger generations regarding the older generations is their use of or lack of use with technology (Johnson, 2018). There must be one-on-one training with older generations to help them learn and feel comfortable using today's advanced array of technology (Johnson, 2018). The more they can understand technology, the easier it will be for them to know how technology can make their jobs easier (Johnson, 2018). The same holds true for using technology for recruiting.

Typical recruiting methods are not proving to be productive in attracting applicants. The standard way of recruitment is to send recruiters to colleges, job fairs, and community outreach events to hand out brochures, show videos, and talk about the good attributes of the department, to attract applicants (Ellis et al., 2005). Another traditional recruiting method is to use job boards such as Indeed, Monster or different police chief association websites (Ellis et al., 2005).

Conventional recruiting methods make a minimal number of people aware of the job opportunity but may not always capture the attention or interest of younger generations. These traditional methods do not appeal to the interest of younger generations, which stimulate by more up-to-date digital platforms. Millennials and Gen Z

are technology savvy which means for an organization to attract the younger generations, technology is imperative for successfully recruiting them (Greenberg, 2021). Most of the people in the younger generations use technology and social media outlets. Most of them spend 33 minutes on Facebook, 41.9 minutes per day on YouTube, 29 minutes per day on Instagram, and about 32 minutes per day on Tik Tok (Djordjevic, 2021). Attracting younger generations can be highly effective by using social media.

With a lack of interest in law enforcement and an inability to attract qualified applicants, filling much-needed law enforcement positions has been challenging. Most efforts put into recruiting are centered around organizational budget constraints. Budget constraints have caused many organizations to lose officers and made recruiting replacement officers a more significant challenge (Wilson et al., 2010). Budget cuts are the reason organizations are reluctant to change their recruiting methods. Budget cuts have a considerable hindrance to recruiting, hiring, and retention. The extreme lack of funding for salaries makes it difficult to attract potential applicants willing to do the job. Many departments will limit their recruiting efforts because of budget shortages.

Police Chiefs across the nation are trying to manage their departments with reduced budgets. Yet, they are responsible for decreasing crime and engaging in community policing with a limited staff of officers on the street. Budget cuts have also affected salaries, making a career in law enforcement less attractive to the younger generations. The average police officer salary is approximately 53,543.00 per year (Indeed, 2021). This salary range may vary by location and is not as attractive to applicants when they can secure jobs at a higher pay rate in the private sector. Budget

constraints are causing many law enforcement organizations to compete with the private sector job market (Ellis et al., 2005).

To attract the younger generations, organizations must offer a stable platform, job security, promotional opportunities, and good options for retirement (Greenberg, 2021). It is equally important that organizations be able to use technology throughout the hiring process. According to Greenberg (2021), there is nothing more frustrating to young candidates than knowing they will have to use technology and techniques that are older than they are.

Taking an innovative and cost-efficient approach to recruiting through social media may be beneficial in lowering recruiting costs and making fewer recruiting trips. Using social media is a very inexpensive way of recruiting the next generation. In most cases, there is no need to pay for advertising costs, and the information has a broader range for reaching more people (Ziegler, 2020).

RECOMMENDATION

Police organizations should consider new and creative approaches to recruiting and hiring the next generation of law enforcement professionals. Police agencies across the nation are understaffed and finding recruits have proven to be highly challenging. The effect of police personnel shortages has resulted in an increase in crime in many communities and a lack of community support.

To curtail the shortage of law enforcement personnel, organizations must embrace technology as a means of recruiting, hiring, and retention. Social media platforms have been proven to be a great asset in attracting millennial and Gen Z applicants. The use of technology and some executives and administrators avoid social

media platforms due to a lack of understanding and fear of the swiftly changing digital world we live in. However, many people get their information today through social media. For this reason, social media as a recruitment tool will increase an organization's applicant pool and potential candidates.

Social media will also provide organizations with a constant advertisement of the agency, its values, and its mission. Social media will serve as a recruitment mechanism to highlight the department's community engagement programs and thus rebuild and strengthen community trust. With the many opposing views about law enforcement agencies and their policing processes, transparency in both positive and negative aspects of an organization will build legitimacy with the communities served.

Police departments should also use social media to share the diversity within the organization. Generationally speaking, Baby Boomers and Gen X typically want careers that sustain their interests, such as family support, vacations, and home purchases (Greenberg, 2021). The younger generation has greater expectations, such as enhancing the world they live in, both in their community and the world at large (Greenberg 2021). Understanding the generational expectations and ideals, organizations should market themselves to show how they fit in the grand scheme of diverse and generational expectations.

Thinking outside of the box, law enforcement agencies should consider recruiting out of high schools that offer their students the possibility to graduate with an associate degree. According to the *Texas Commission on Law Enforcement Statutes and Rules Handbook (2020)*, a person can become a peace officer at the age of eighteen if they have an associate degree or at least 60 college hours. Hiring at younger generations

allows organizations to hire, mold, and develop the future leaders of the law enforcement industry. A person that is 18 years old may not have a lot of real-life experience. Pairing them with a seasoned officer for an extended period may give them a better understanding of law enforcement and the internal and external expectations that come with being in the profession. This type of innovative process requires investing time and energy into personnel.

Generation Z is the youngest generation in a very diverse workforce. To attract this generation, there must be a compromise without degradation of the true purpose of the office of the badge and the totality of what it means to be a law enforcement officer. Organizations must embrace that their values, skill set, and expectations are different from traditional generations. Agencies must attract and connect with them and train and groom them to become the law enforcement professionals of the future (Singh & Dangmei, n.d.).

Recruiting through social media, at high schools, and through Police Explorer programs will increase the applicant pool and potential new hires within an organization. Closing the deficiency gap will increase the number of patrol officers on the street and within specialized divisions. With this increase in staffing, law enforcement agencies can begin to address their crime issues adequately, engage in more community-oriented policing events, change negative public perception, and re-establish the nobility of law enforcement.

REFERENCES

- Acheampong, N. A. A. (2020). Reward preferences of the youngest generation: Attracting, recruiting, and retaining generation z into public sector organizations. *Compensation & Benefits Review*, 53(2), 75–97.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/0886368720954803>
- Asabor, E., Corbin, T., & Boatright, D. (2020, October 28). *Fatal Police Shootings Among Black Americans Remain High, Unchanged Since 2015 - Penn Medicine*. Penn Medicine News. <https://www.pennmedicine.org/news/news-releases/2020/october/fatal-police-shootings-among-black-americans-remain-high-unchanged-since-2015>.
- Bamberger, L. (2003, June). *Exploring police explorer programs*. Exploring Police Explorer Programs | Office of Justice Programs. Retrieved November 13, 2021, from <https://www.ojp.gov/ncjrs/virtual-library/abstracts/exploring-police-explorer-programs>.
- Bloomberg Cities. (2019, February 13). 6 strategies to recruit a stronger and more diverse police force. Medium. Retrieved November 8, 2021, from <https://bloombergcities.medium.com/6-strategies-to-recruit-a-stronger-and-more-diverse-police-force-51f434b2b01f>
- Djordjevic, M. (2021, April 26). *How much time do people spend on social media in 2021?* Letterly. Retrieved November 10, 2021, from <https://letter.ly/how-much-time-do-people-spend-on-social-media/>.

- Ellis, G., Marshall, G., Skinner, C., & Smith, G. (2005, January). Using visual technology for recruitment. *Using Visual Technology for Recruitment | Office of Justice Programs*. Retrieved November 10, 2021, from <https://www.ojp.gov/ncjrs/virtual-library/abstracts/using-visual-technology-recruitment>.
- Greenberg, A. (2021, March 31). *15 Strategies for recruiting millennial and gen z candidates*. Contract Recruiter. <https://www.contractrecruiter.com/strategies-recruiting-millennial-genz/>.
- Indeed. (2021, November 4). Police Officer salary in United States. Build a career you'll love. Retrieved November 10, 2021, from <https://www.indeed.com/career/police-officer/salaries>.
- Johnson, M. (2018, March 16). *Baby boomers and technology - 2 things to get them to embrace technology*. Meagan Johnson. Retrieved November 13, 2021, from <https://meaganjohnson.com/baby-boomers-and-technology/>
- Langham, B. (2017, May 24). Millennials and improving recruitment in law enforcement. *The Police Chief Magazine*. Retrieved November 10, 2021, from <https://www.policechiefmagazine.org/millennials-and-improving-recruitment/>.
- Melendi, C. (2020, June 30). *Generational differences on social media: A deep dive*. Flagship Social. <https://flagshipsocial.com/blog/generational-differences-on-social-media-a-deep-dive>
- Nichols, T. (2017). *Ambush attacks against law enforcement: Safety and prevention strategies*. Office of Justice Programs. <https://www.ojp.gov/library/publications/ambush-attacks-against-law-enforcement-safety-and-prevention-strategies>.

- Perry, N. (2020, March 10). *6 key steps to improve police recruitment and retention*. Police1. <https://www.police1.com/police-recruiting/articles/6-key-steps-to-improve-police-recruitment-and-retention-vhuBrcwgr9gjbLwE/>.
- Police1. (2019, May 2). *Roundtable: How to match your agency's social media strategy with community needs*. Police1. Retrieved November 7, 2021, from <https://www.police1.com/community-policing/articles/roundtable-how-to-match-your-agencys-social-media-strategy-with-community-needs-LJrIB21CrcBFdx48/>
- Rigaux, C., & Cunningham, J. B. (2020). Enhancing recruitment and retention of visible minority police officers in Canadian policing agencies. *Policing and Society*, 31(4), 454–482. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10439463.2020.1750611>
- Sam. (2020, August 4). *5 Creative Police Recruiting Strategies to Attract Diverse Candidates*. Police Recruiting Agency. <https://pdrecruiting.com/creative-police-recruiting-strategies/>.
- Singh, A. P., & Dangmei, J. (n.d.). (PDF) *Understanding the generation z: The future workforce*. ResearchGate. Retrieved November 9, 2021, from https://www.researchgate.net/publication/305280948_UNDERSTANDING_THE_GENERATION_Z_THE_FUTURE_WORKFORCE.
- Smith, S. (2016, June). *A Crisis Facing Law Enforcement: Recruiting in the 21st Century*. The Police Chief Magazine. Retrieved November 10, 2021, from <https://www.policechiefmagazine.org/a-crisis-facing-law-enforcement-recruiting-in-the-21st-century/>.

Texas Commission on Law Enforcement Statutes and Rules Handbook. (2020, February 1). TCOLE. Retrieved November 8, 2021, from

<http://tcole.texas.gov/sites/default/files/Rules%20Handbook%202-1-2020.pdf>

Wilson, J., Dalton, E., Scheer, C., & Grammich, C. A. (2010). *Police recruitment and retention for the new millennium.* COPS. Retrieved November 9, 2021, from

<https://cops.usdoj.gov/RIC/Publications/Publications/cops-p199-pub.pdf>.

Ziegler, S. (2020, March 11). *What every PD needs in a social media recruitment plan.*

Police1. Retrieved November 7, 2021, from <https://www.police1.com/police-recruiting/articles/what-every-pd-needs-in-a-social-media-recruitment-plan-hSz8NU7u48RvtHYr/>