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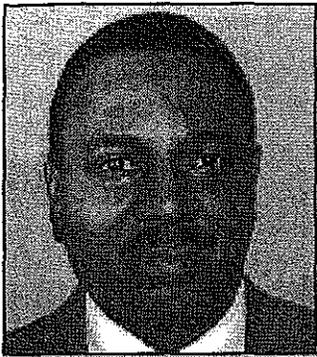
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The Recruitment and Selection of Minority Police Officers

By Patrick Oliver

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Patrick Oliver

Why Ethnic Diversity in Hiring?

Cultural diversity is by no means a new phenomenon; it is a fact of life. The world has gradually come to America and daily life now includes the likelihood of encountering cultural diversity to a degree unparalleled in our history. In a public-sector profession spanning diverse

communities, we should lead the way in demonstrating to other professions how effective diverse organizations can and should be. I assert that an organization that is culturally diverse will be more functional, effective and cohesive.

As early as the 1600's, people have migrated to the United States with the hope for a better life, a better future for themselves and their families. They came here seeking religious liberty and freedom with the exceptions of those brought here as slaves. All those who immigrate here seek to be treated with dignity and respect. Care must be taken to identify ways to involve all the ethnic groups of the community in our organization. We must learn to value ethnic diversity.

The most popular paragraph of our Declaration of Independence states, "We hold these Truths to be self-evident, that all Men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights that among these are Life, Liberty and the Pursuit of Happiness". These rights are unalienable because they were not given by man; therefore can not be taken by man; they are God-given rights. Many Americans are familiar with this statement. Interestingly many Americans (including law enforcement officers) are unaware of the words that immediately follow this statement. The Declaration goes on to say... "That to secure these rights, governments were instituted among Men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed, That whenever any Form of Government becomes destructive to these ends, it is the Right of People to alter or to abolish it"... It does indicate that our government

is instituted to secure these rights! If government fails to establish these rights then the people have the right to alter or abolish it. Therefore it is the responsibility of government to see that all are treated in accordance with dictates of the Constitution. To maintain this vision of individual liberty, the protection of life and personal responsibility, law enforcement agencies should model workplace diversity.

To enhance the protection of such rights the workforce should reflect the ethnicity of the community. This is the catalyst for improving the relationship between the law enforcement agency and various segments of the community. Poor law enforcement/ community relations hinder the recruitment of qualified applicants. It is difficult to develop strong positive community relations in the minority community without treating the cause - a lack of human diversity. Each ethnic group has various backgrounds, perspectives, knowledge, skills and experiences which are instrumental in improving the effectiveness of an organization. It would be prudent for law enforcement agencies to embrace diversity - a stepping stone to creating trust among the minority members of the community.

The chief's role is to provide strong leadership and to recognize the opportunities posed by increasing diversity. He or she must believe in and value a diverse organization. A tangible benchmark would be to achieve a composition of diversity in law enforcement agencies that is consistent with the ethnicity of the community. Additionally, employers must be held accountable for diversity in hiring, assignments, training and promotion. It is highly recommended that a chief should mandate diversity training for all employees and provide updated in-service training on this topic each year. Training should be inextricably linked to an understanding and application of the Constitution of the United States to law enforcement intervention with members of the community. The chief must ensure that the organizational policies, procedures, rules and regulations reflect the organization's philosophy and practices concerning human diversity. Employees and managers alike must be held accountable for compliance with these mandates. This means rewarding those who support the philosophy and penalizing those who do not.

The Impact of Human Diversity on Effective Policing

The Commission on Accreditation for Law Enforcement Agencies mandates that every law enforcement agency seeking accreditation strive to achieve a sworn workforce that is representative of the available workforce in the agency's service community relative to its ethnic and gender composition. If the current composition of the agency's sworn workforce is not representative of the community, then the agency must describe how it intends to achieve this goal in its recruitment plan. (Commission on Accreditation for Law Enforcement Agencies [CALEA] Standards Manual, 5th Edition, July 2006.) It is the Commission's expectation that an accredited agency will be an equal opportunity employer. Equal opportunity is the removal of barriers that prevent people from being treated fairly for employment purposes. It is also expected that if any ethnic group or gender is underrepresented, the recruitment plan will include proactive steps to encourage members of that group to seek employment opportunities.

If we could shrink the Earth's population to a village of precisely 100 people, with all the existing human ratios remaining the same, there would be:

- 60 Asians
- 12 Europeans
- 13 Western Hemisphere, North & South
- 14 Africans
- 1 South Pacific
- 51 male
- 49 female
- 82 non-white
- 18 white
- 67 non-Christian
- 33 Christians
- 89 heterosexual
- 11 homosexual

[Village of 100, 3rd Edition, ATS Media 2006]

This indicates that despite the diversity of your community the world is a very diverse place. In the United States people of color are currently numbering 100 million and growing exponentially, it is only a matter of time before this explosion impacts every organization's customers and workforce. (Jon Meacham, *The New Face of Race*, Newsweek, Sept. 18, 2000). Care must be taken to identify ways to involve all the ethnic groups of the community in our organization. The United States is the most diverse country in the world and is becoming increasingly more diverse each day. It is therefore in the best interest of the law enforcement agencies in America to learn how to effectively interact and value ethnicity. As diversity in America increases, is your law enforcement agency truly reflecting this populace?

Recruitment and Selection Recommendations

We are now in an era in which it is more difficult to recruit and select qualified law enforcement candidates. Many in leadership positions remember when there was an abundance of qualified candidates. Today, that has changed; it is difficult to find quality candidates of any ethnicity. Attracting and retaining high caliber personnel is the most critical issue facing executives in any profession. The following is a list of key recommendations to assist in the recruitment of all law enforcement applicants, particularly ethnic minorities. These are all best practices used by law enforcement agencies internationally.

1. Build Strong Partnerships with the Community

Identify key community and business leaders to develop relationships that will provide a potential pipeline of the most qualified candidates. Suggested partnerships include the military, college and high school counselors, community-based organizations, student associations, public and private customer service organizations and other departments internal to the agency's jurisdiction. Build formal relationships between leaders in each organization and members of your recruitment team. Additionally, refer candidates that are not a good match for your agency to a more compatible organization, ideally a liaison agency for possible employment.

2. Analyze Recruitment Efforts

How much does your agency know about the success of past recruitment efforts and effective contemporary methods? Make an effort to better understand the agency, community, and the results of current and/or past recruitment efforts. Your research for example should provide an agency with information to aid in answering the following questions: Who is the ideal candidate? What job qualifications are compatible with the agency's needs? What advertising and other efforts are yielding the best results? What are the agency's demographics and how do they compare with the community served? What has attracted and kept existing staff? What were the geographical locations of current officers prior to being hired? Why do officers leave the agency? Are your pay and benefits compatible with similar agencies within the geographic area? How long does it take candidates to complete the selection process once begun? The answers to these and other relevant questions will impact recruitment planning, advertising, and strategies.

3. Conduct a Behavioral-based Job Interview

Behavioral-based oral interviews are recommended. Interview questions must be based on job-related knowledge, skills, abilities, behaviors, and traits. The following principles should be followed when conducting behavioral-based interviews.

1. Behavioral-based interviews function on the understanding that past performance is the best indicator of future performance.
2. The behavioral-based interview will compare the candidate's past performance with the criteria identified for job success, and assist in determining if a candidate has the requisite skills and abilities.
3. All interview questions must be job-related and valid.
4. Training is required for the individual developing job-related questions and participating in an oral interview board.
5. All persons evaluating the interviewee should be provided with information on properly evaluating the candidate's responses in comparison to effective job-related behaviors.
6. Behavioral-based interview questions should be modified or updated as knowledge, skills, abilities behaviors and traits for the job changes.
7. Prior to conducting an interview questions should be developed based on a job analysis and must be standardized for all candidates.
8. An essential purpose of any oral interview is to evaluate the candidate's suitability for the job in addition to their oral communication skills.

4. Develop and Implement a Recruitment Plan

The purpose of a recruitment plan is to capitalize on the strengths of an agency, identify potential opportunities, and identify and mitigate the weaknesses and threats, where possible, in order to position the agency to accomplish its recruitment goals. The recruitment plan should address the questions of who, what qualities, where, why and how your agency will achieve its recruitment goals. An agency should have recruitment goals and plans for a three to five year period. The question must be critically asked how important is recruitment, particularly in relation to identifying minority candidates? If important and a priority then sufficient resources should be allocated. How many candidates will be hired? What diversity needs exist? How many recruiters will be needed to reach these goals? How much money will be allocated? Where are the use of resources most effective? How and to whom should you market? What local agencies and leaders can be partnered with to identify qualified candidates? An effective strategic recruitment plan will require the involvement of the entire agency and a thorough comprehensive analysis. Find ways to speed up the recruitment and testing process because the best candidates left in the hiring process too long will be hired elsewhere.

Secure the right screening tools to help identify the best candidates. Consider employing a "Pre-Qualifying

Questionnaire" that will provide an opportunity for people to withdraw if they have disqualifiers in their background. Train evaluators in candidate selection. The selection process should be geared toward assessing candidate's suitability for the agency if not for the position for which they have applied, then for referral elsewhere.

5. Developing an Advertising Plan

Advertising should be geared toward attracting the most qualified candidates. Ideally you do not want "the best available" when you're recruiting you want "the best period." In order to do this, one needs to know what the most qualified candidates are seeking in a law enforcement career job. The agency should develop an attractive, user friendly interactive job website for today's savvy qualified job seeker. This may require some research. In the process of developing a message, you will want to seek input from targeted groups to determine if the message will be received the way it is intended.

An important aspect to consider is "branding." Branding is a method of identifying the style and manner in which your agency does policing. This helps to answer the question of why a qualified candidate would seek employment there. Scan the community to find recruitment opportunities that may exist due to downsizing and be sensitive to cyclical factors, such as in the spring when college graduates are busy looking for career opportunities.

Another consideration is the medium used to advertise. A multi-faceted approach usually works best. Advertise in ways that will reach the best candidates. Be mindful that most candidates hired live within a geographical radius of the agency. Determine the radius by surveying your current employees. Recruitment resources spent outside this radius are generally wasted. Develop a way to track which approach yields the best candidates. Employees are the best recruiters only if they know what qualities are desired. All managers should be involved in recruitment. Provide employees with materials that can be distributed to potential qualified candidates. Consider ways to acknowledge and/or reward employees who refer candidates, especially when those candidates are hired.

6. Personalize the Recruitment Process with Candidates

Interest must be created for qualified candidates. There is a great benefit to personalizing the recruitment process and "courting" candidates. Selected staff should be accessible to candidates to answer questions regularly. Send notices to candidates at predetermined intervals keeping them abreast of their status in the selection process. Reach out to the families of candidates to address concerns that may arise and schedule a meeting for them with the management staff. Assign an agency staff to mentor each candidate after being hired and before starting the basic training academy. Require a ride-along for all candidates prior to

hiring. Begin and complete the selection process within 90 days and issue each candidate a document outlining the entire selection process with a timetable for each step in the process. Consider establishing an ongoing college campus presence by sponsoring events/refreshments on campuses (such as pizza at a club meeting) that allow recruiters to develop relationships with students over time. Hire temporary employees in other capacities as a conduit to bring potential candidates into the agency, promoting the use of high school and college interns. Utilize search engines to pinpoint potentially qualified candidates in other fields. Begin a cadet program with local high schools. Grow your own police officers by hiring them part-time as civilians and after high school. Mentor them and provide tuition assistance for a college degree and hire them as an officer after graduation when they are of age. Provide an ongoing application process in which you recruit year round. Confer with employees, encourage them to tell their "story" about what attracted and keeps them working for the agency (print, video-tape or post stories on the internet). Practice effective community outreach. The agencies that are most successful employ multiple strategies. However, they are also willing to track each strategy's effectiveness and adjust accordingly as they strive to attract qualified candidates.

7. Properly Screen and Select Recruiters

Develop criteria for the agency's selection of a recruiter. Considerations should be given to matching the diversity of recruiters with those who the agency wants to recruit. Evaluate each potential recruiter's willingness to become and recruiter for the agency. The officer's years of service, assignments, education, and written and oral communication skills are key selection criteria. The training of recruiters is critical to their success. Some of the topics should include customer service, job qualifications, pay and benefits, and how to guide prospective candidates through the selection process. Identify a list of the answers to frequently asked questions of law enforcement candidates. Consider mandating a training program for all recruiters selected which must be completed prior to beginning the assignment. Ideally this is a full-time assignment or an officer is detailed to this assignment for a specific duration to give full time and attention to this task during the recruitment period.

A Leadership Challenge

The most effective decisions law enforcement leaders can make is the hiring of employees. Highly qualified and talented new employees will determine the future of the agency. The quality of every organization is reduced to the quality of its people. If the officers in your agency are not competitive in the profession, how can your organization be competitive in the profession? Providing quality law enforcement service will always be obstructed by the ability to hire top talent. That top talent in the most progressive law

enforcement agencies will be representative of the ethnic and gender composition of their community.

Professor Patrick Oliver serves as assistant professor of Criminal Justice and director of the Criminal Justice Program. Prior to coming to Cedarville in 2005, he served 27 years in law enforcement, including chief of police in the city of Fairborn, Grandview Heights, and Cleveland, Ohio, and as Ranger Chief of Cleveland Metropolitan Parks. He also spent eleven years as a trooper with the Ohio State Highway Patrol.

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