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Law Enforcement Management Challenges For the 21st Century

By Chief Patrick Oliver
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Replace Outdated Management Assumptions

Many law enforcement leaders assume there must be one right organization for their agency. The search for the ideal structure first brought us the functional structure, then decentralization and, most recently, teamwork. However, all law enforcement organizations are different, and a given structure in one organization may not be applicable to another. Therefore, instead of searching for the right organizational structure, management needs to learn to look for, develop and test that which best fits the specific challenge or organizational task. Managers must be thinkers, constantly in search of the best method, techniques and strategies.

Another assumption is that there are various management styles. This theory says that each person has a management style and that this style is useful in getting things done in an organization. However, every manager has different styles with some that are dominant. Managers must learn to adopt varying styles based on the individuals and the circumstances, maintaining an ongoing balance between effectiveness and efficiency, or managing people while accomplishing the task. In an era when more managers will be coming into the organization from the outside, bringing philosophies and techniques they've used some other place, these may not be the most effective method in the new organization. In fact, the manager should conduct an analysis to determine both customer (community members) needs and agency goals before deciding upon specific methods.

The new assumption for management is to start with what the customer values, rather than industry accepted

values or techniques. The answer to the question of how to improve customer services lies with the customer. By obtaining input and feedback and involving the customer, continuous improvement may become a reality. The establishment of mission, values and goals must involve the customer.

Adopt New Business Strategies

Managing a law enforcement agency is the management of a not-for-profit organization. This mentality has resulted in a minimal interest in analyzing cost of service delivery. Managers would find it beneficial to provide projections of the cost of providing a specific service to its customers. These projections assist in establishing priorities while developing and implementing the budget. Instead of decisions being made without fully understanding the cost impact, decision making will be enhanced by the use of activity based cost formulas.

The law enforcement manager must develop and implement ongoing customer input and feedback instruments. These instruments may either be developed by a private consultant or constructed internally. They assist the agency by answering such questions as: What services to provide? How to provide them? Where are needs the greatest? Who should be involved? Properly answering these questions will help any agency become both more effective and efficient.

Law enforcement agencies will also raise funds and obtain in-kind donations from their clients. These assets should be obtained by a law enforcement related civilian organization whose mission is to assist in the policing of the community. These organizations will help obtain assets

outside the parameters of the agency budget. The recent establishment of Police Foundations fills this void by providing both financial and political support to law enforcement agencies.

Law enforcement organizations no longer will need to handle all of the tasks their agency is responsible for. The outsourcing of tasks will be deemed as both a more effective and efficient way of getting things done. Law enforcement officers do not have all of the knowledge, skills and abilities necessary to improve service delivery or complete technical assignments, so contracting for services becomes a viable option.

See Change As Opportunity

The one constant in an organization is change and successful managers must learn how to manage this. First, they must get staff to see change as opportunities. They must be able to see a benefit for both the organization and themselves. One way to begin to manage change is to abandon activities that no longer produce results. By properly surveying our clients we can determine how and why service may be improved. We can then develop a strategy which is based on the community environment and the staff's abilities, then measure the results to determine what improvements may be made. We should then market our success to our clients, the media and the law enforcement industry. When one law enforcement organization improves its service delivery, the bar is raised and a new standard for service is created.

Properly Obtain and Interpret Information

The management of a law enforcement organization is the management

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Challenges... (continued)

of an information intensive agency. The sunshine laws (public records laws) require that law enforcement collect and maintain a large amount of informational data.¹ As technological development goes from dynamic to explosive, collecting the right information becomes critical to success. It's not an issue of how much information is collected, but *what* information is collected and the proper manipulation of critical data. Proper data manipulation improves the decision-making process. The current focus of data manipulation in law enforcement is on criminal statistics in order to develop and implement crime reduction strategies.² This methodology has brought considerable progress to our industry. However, the new information frontier will be the collection and manipulation of data indicating client needs, wants, and habits. There is much to be gained from our private sector partners in this area.

Hire Ethical Knowledge Workers

A dramatic change for law enforcement managers will be the proper identification and selection of ethical people who are also knowledge workers. The current selection process must be turned upside down. Instead of selecting an employee based on the elimination of deficient behaviors and traits, we must select the employee who has positive behaviors and traits with specific skills. The most critical step in hiring the knowledge worker is to ask the question: What is the mission; what are the goals; and what are the tasks for the organization? Then it is imperative to select that employee who has the knowledge, skills and abilities consistent with our

mission, goals and tasks. Also key is selecting that employee who can accomplish the mission, goals and tasks in an ethical environment based on his/her own high ethical standards. There should be a search for methods and instruments to identify ethical individuals. The ethical side of the equation will be more critical and more difficult than the knowledge side of the equation.

Knowledge workers must be managed differently than those workers of today. Their assets, which are knowledge and skills, are totally portable. Therefore, management must create an environment where they desire to enter and remain in the organization for a certain period of time.

Manage Your Career Through Several Organizations

The challenge for the law enforcement manager will be to develop a career plan based on acquiring certain knowledge, skills and abilities, *not* the accomplishment of a specific career goal. The development of a successful "skill set" will ensure that a manager can be productive on different management teams in several organizations in and out of the public sector. To prepare for that future the manager must ask: Who am I? What are my strengths? How do I work? Where do I belong? One's primary focus should be to concentrate on strengths once they are properly identified, which produces performance results. Second is to improve those deficient areas which are important in building the identified valuable skill set. Specific jobs currently in the job market may be eliminated, and new jobs may be

added. Therefore, managers will have to be prepared for more than one job, one assignment and one career.

The law enforcement manager should develop mentoring relationships which operate as a triad. Every manager should be mentored by a superior, should mentor a subordinate, and have a regular exchange with a peer. This triad mentoring relationship is a powerful formula which will develop and enhance the manager.

Networking will be key to the manager's career development. The law enforcement manager should network within the industry and also in the private sector. Private sector networking should be based on the identification of skills one is developing to improve the skills identified in the career plan. An example of this would be to join Toastmasters organization to improve public speaking ability. Volunteering and serving on boards outside of law enforcement enhances the manager's value. This is particularly important when the manager is ready to move from public sector law enforcement to the private sector.

There will be plenty of law enforcement management challenges in the 21st century. The six areas identified are what I believe to be primary challenges awaiting the manager who chooses to be effective in the next millennium.

¹ - The Public Records Act
Ohio Rev. Code section
149.43

² - New York City Police Department
Comstat Method. IACP Magazine
Feb 2000, p. 23.

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