Recognizing Diversity: It's About Doing the Right Thing

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Recognizing Diversity: It's About Doing the Right Thing

I believe a progressive and successful chief executive officer in a law enforcement agency should seek to obtain human diversity within the agency. Human diversity goes beyond race. It includes the full range of diversity in our society. The differences in people may be articulated by race, religion, age, gender, disability, etc. The issue of how to diversify the workforce and why we want human diversity in the workplace is still a controversial one. I think that is unfortunate because I believe diversity is an important factor in a highly effective work environment. Human diversity is promoted not because it is politically correct, not because it looks good, not to satisfy our minority constituency, it is promoted because it is the right thing to do.

An organization made up of a diverse group of individuals will make better decisions and therefore will become a more effective organization. Human diversity is good business in law enforcement and other industries. In a public-sector industry such as ours, we should lead the way in showing other industries how effective diverse organizations can and should be. The more diverse your organization, the better your decision-making process.

Individuals with different backgrounds, perspectives, knowledge, skills and experience improve the quality of decision making in an organization. The chief's role is to provide strong leadership in the area of diversity. This means holding people accountable and responsible for diversity in hiring, assignments and promotion. Additionally, the chief should mandate diversity training for all employees and provide updated in-service training on this topic every three to five years. Lastly, the chief and should articulate the inappropriate behavior along with the conduct expected by management. The supervisor should identify all appropriate agency documents that were violated by this demonstration of prejudice. These documents may include the agency's mission statement, values, organizational goals and objectives, policies, procedures, rules and regulations. Progressive discipline should be practiced; however, one must always consider the seriousness of the offense to determine the appropriate place to start on the progressive discipline continuum.

To maintain an environment free of prejudice, I believe two fundamental things must be accomplished. First, the behavior expectations of employees must be communicated to all. Second, when there is a breach of conduct the response from management must be swift and sure. If there is one thing all managers must be keenly aware of it is that the most common criticism from our staff concerns our inability to deal with problem employees. Our philosophy in this area should be the same as it is for community policing; the key is prevention.

By Chief Patrick Oliver

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