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Law Enforcement Bulletin

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CAUTION

AIDS
CASE I

July 1987

Autoclave
for Biohazardous
Materials

Self Venting/Sealed

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Handling Infected Evidence

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You're a Newly Appointed Chief of Police!

By
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*Chief of Police
Fargo, ND*

Congratulations on your appointment as chief of police. This advancement most likely is the result of years of experience as a deputy chief or senior command officer in your department or in a large or midsized police department. Now you have accepted a position that will be challenging, rewarding, and frustrating!

You were probably hired because of the perceptions that you were a qualified manager who could "professionalize" the police department. However, the word "professional" is value laden, a lesson soon to be learned. You may immediately face direct and indirect organizational revolt, labor problems, or attempts at politicization by special interest groups. You may be barraged with public speaking requests and inquiries from the press.

Often, specific articulated goals and objectives will not be outlined for you, but you will still be expected to solve unidentified problems. Performance evaluation will be based upon perceptions of your management ability, rather than an objective critique of specific goal attainment. You may receive little, if any, positive feedback from the appointing authority, whose work experience may have never included managing an organization.

Conflict may occur when your leadership decisions do not always comple-

ment municipal government decisions. Few city managers or elected officials understand that your role involves leadership in a paramilitary organization and management responsibility in a municipal government.

You should take advantage of the opportunity to become more sensitive to the political environment in which your employer must successfully function, while educating your employer on the basic concepts of police administration. Too many chiefs of police purposely create a knowledge vacuum for the appointing authority and reinforce the perceived mystic of police organizations. However, you may find that support for your organization's goals and objectives will increase in direct relationship to an understanding of your policing philosophy and the problems unique to the police mission.

Preparing The Environment For Change

Many newly appointed chiefs of police believe that rapid change indicates their knowledge and dedication to the immediate evolution of systems, procedures, and goals. While some organizational problems require immediate attention, the majority do not.

If you adopt a Socratic method of teaching rather than a directional management style, you will begin to identify

those within the organization with creative management and technical expertise. If you adopt a coequal management approach with these formal and informal leaders, you may find that your organizational philosophy will be accepted more readily, thus enabling the organizational change process to occur with less resistance from the general population. Brilliance does not commence or end with the chief of police, but is equally disseminated throughout the organization, regardless of how stagnant it has become during the preceding years. Whenever feasible, telegraph your thoughts, ideas, and concepts to all members of the organization, but be aware of the impact your verbal statement or observation may have upon the organization. Some officers equate a casual comment by the chief of police with a departmental general order. Too few are capable of separating concepts and ideas in the formative stages from well-defined directives; the chief's verbalization becomes department policy.

Your practical experience and education have helped form the experimental base which will assist you in attaining one of your primary goals—developing solutions to unique problems in the community. Rules, regulations, and police strategies should meet the demands and expectations of the com-



Chief Franks

munity you are serving.

The Organizational Deviate

If your experience has been in a large agency, you are aware of many subtle and direct methods by which the nonteam player, rabble-rouser, hot-shot, etc., are managed. They are generally identified and transferred into oblivion. Before you systematically banish this person, determine his intellectual capacity for growth, inquiry, and improving the delivery of service to your community. Identifying and nurturing those individuals capable of intellectual risk-taking may be an asset in establishing an organizational philosophy where reasoned change becomes the expectations of status quo, rather than complacency with current performance.

Those who possess the unique intellectual capability of explorative thinking will nudge the organization into developing viable solutions to contemporary problems rather than reinforcing problem-solving methods that have continually failed. It may be necessary for you to remove this individual from the rank-and-file and provide an environment for the employee that promotes "blue sky" thinking. The employee's contributions must be intellectually fruitful, as well as productive.

A Go-Go Atmosphere and Leadership

One ingredient for organizational success is to promote a "go-go" atmosphere. A major goal of the chief executive officer is to establish an environment in which success is expected and excellence is desired. While one can acknowledge that organizational problems exist, it is not essential or desirable to continually bemoan training, minimal budget, and unqualified personnel as reasons for a nonprogressive organization. If the chief executive officer establishes a "can do," will-succeed environment, an organization that is looking forward to change will emerge—one that will be an industry leader. Continually downgrading the organization and its personnel will be counterproductive for long-term positive results.

Leadership is often confused with management techniques. While a good leader often possesses good management skills, good managers are not necessarily organizational leaders. Leaders create images of excellence and establish and reinforce the philosophical mores of the organization. Charisma and presence have often been associated with leadership. Both are important, but should be buttressed with the expansiveness of a futurist, the philosophy of an enlightened educator, and the realism of an organizational pragmatist. The chief of police's major responsibility is leadership within the organization.

The Movable Office

The office of the chief of police is with the individual, not in a chair behind a desk. Many chief executive officers apparently believe they enhance their formal authority by conducting departmental business from *their* chair, behind *their* desk, in *their* office. Formal authority may be enhanced, but oppor-

tunities for organizational changes and employee development may be diminished. To institute dialog, solve problems, and gain information, it may be beneficial to approach the individual(s) you believe possess the desired information. Do not always summon them to your office. Why create barriers which may be a detriment to communication if you can avoid them by simply walking down the hall, across the street, riding in a radio car, or somewhere else where positive communication links may be forged.

Discipline

Discipline is definitely a two-way communication that does not necessarily have to be discussed in the chief's office. Unless there are prescribed disciplines for specific offenses or a labor contract that specifies procedures, an open discussion of the offense may lead to an opportunity for positive discipline and employee growth. Oftentimes, the employee may suggest more appropriate discipline, or you may wish to try a different approach to discipline—one which may contribute to the employee's change of values and bring support to your policing philosophy. Days off or reduction in rank are simplistic approaches to police discipline, though sometimes necessary. Perhaps a holistic approach to designing a discipline process tailored to the individual may be of more benefit to the individual and the organization, if your police system permits the latitude.

External Hiring

In those organizations that require immediate reorganization, one must make the decision of whether to hire externally or develop personnel within the organization that are capable of participating in the transition phase. Recruiting and hiring command officers externally may be your best decision in

“A major goal of the chief executive officer is to establish and environment in which success is expected and excellence is desired.”

the short run and may assist you in solving perceived crises. However, the total health of the organization may not be enhanced by this decision.

You may not find the “quick fix” you were anticipating by hiring seasoned command officers from other agencies. Or, the fix may be quick, but it may not be best for the organization. Ultimately, you may be more successful in developing a viable organization which complements your management philosophy by developing personnel within the organization.

Seasoned commanders are not necessarily more adaptive to change than those within the organization. Often, seasoned command officers may have developed personality and management traits which may be detrimental to the organization. If the organizational problems do not involve corruption in your senior command officers, you may consider working with the personnel within your agency in developing their potential, rather than making an often irrevocable decision to immediately seek outside assistance to complement your team-building efforts.

If you believe one of your responsibilities is as a change agent, the process of change may be better accomplished by a gradual educational process with your personnel. This process will, oftentimes, lead to a kindred philosophical agreement of goals, objectives, and responsibilities within the organization.

The Organizational Eunuch

Organizational eunuchs will be found at all levels within public and private industry. They are generally mid- or senior-level management personnel whose approach to problem solving will follow familiar lines—we need more research time, we need more money, we need more staff, it has always worked

before, etc. The comments and observations may have some validity, but their mind set is defeatism rather than a “we can” approach to management. Oftentimes, these same individuals are the ones who will fail to accept the responsibility and accountability for their decisions, but will develop elaborate defense mechanisms to protect themselves from accepting any responsibility for decisions, programs, operations, etc., which have not culminated in success.

Some management personnel who have become organizationally dysfunctional can many times be revitalized by the progressive leader who instills a “can do” attitude that permeates the entire organization. However, do not be surprised if you have limited success at revitalizing the organizational eunuch. He is often the direct result of the Peter Principle and is not capable of internalizing different problem-solving concepts which may be necessary to direct the organization to a successful future. He will continue to reinforce 19th-century decisionmaking processes to solve 20th-century problems. The processes may be packaged under different labels, but close scrutiny will reveal they are the same methods which have failed in the past and will most certainly fail in the future. The organization’s health and growth may depend on your ability to create a change environment for the eunuch and the employee’s ability and willingness to alter his mental processes. This may be an insurmountable task for the organization and the employee. The reasons are legion, but the employee’s nonresponsiveness will soon be evident.

How many resources and how long you continue your attempts to elevate the employee’s competency level depend on a host of social, economic, and organizational assessments. Most chiefs of police wait too long to take

definitive action, either removing the individual from the organization or transferring the employee to a position where his talents will complement the organizational goals. If organizations are going to be proficient in addressing the challenges of the future, creative, intuitive people must be identified and nurtured, people who will institute a holistic approach to developing potential solutions to problems which may evolve in the future. These people will be readily acceptable to “blue sky” thinking, observations, and comments.

Those in the organization who have the ability to challenge and go beyond the knowns and establish new paradigms to meet challenges of the future are those very individuals who may be capable of providing leadership for the future. You will also find that the organization will become revitalized, as challenging concepts and philosophies begin permeating the thought processes of all within the organization. To encourage the continual acceptance of the organizational eunuch will eventually result in a status quo organization which will be fractionalized with the inability to change.

Conclusion

The intent of the forgoing was to initiate the thought processes of a new, and perhaps experienced, chief of police. If the reader is agreeing, disagreeing, or mumbling some indefinable phrase, this article has accomplished its goal.

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