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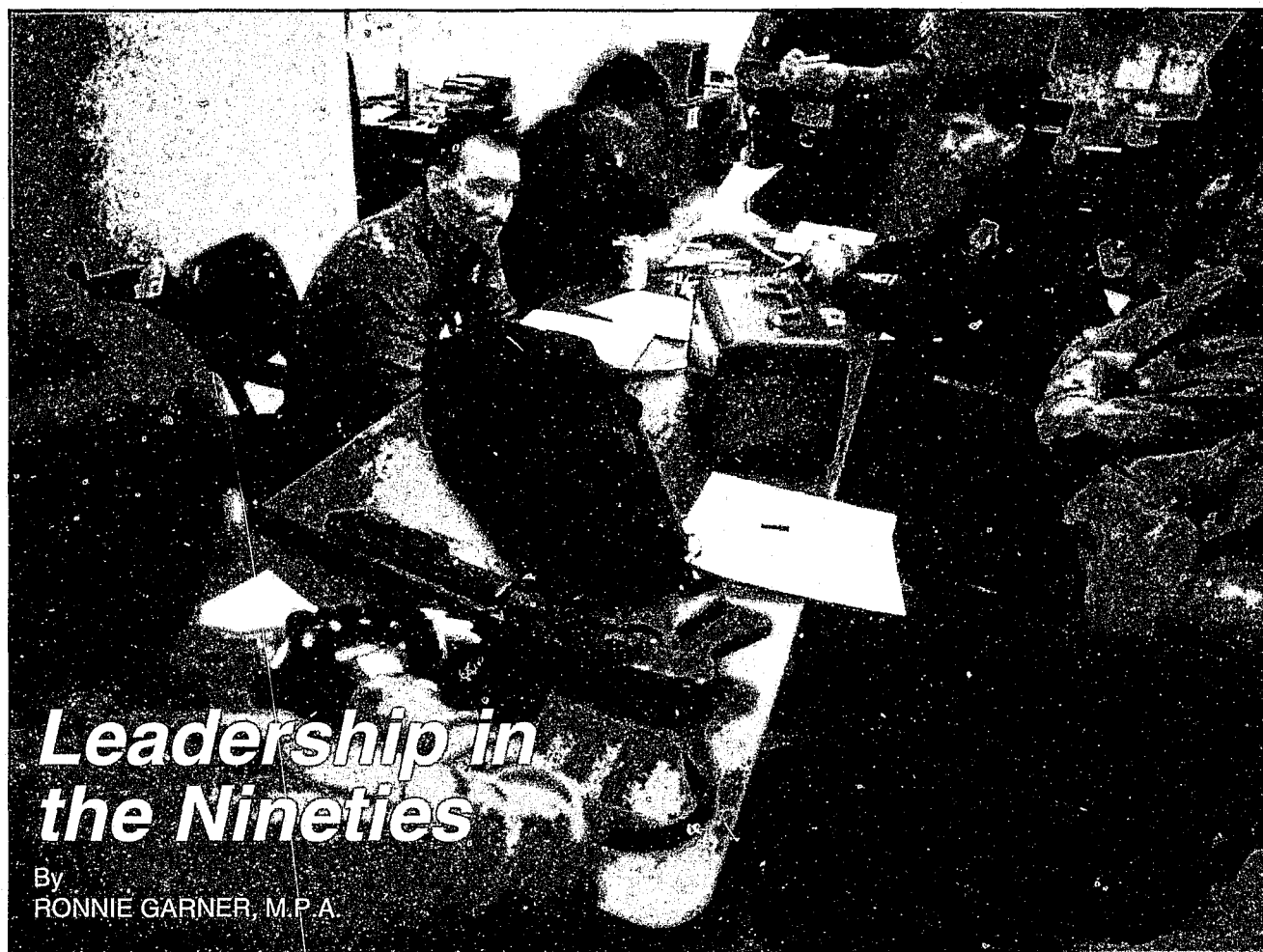
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Leadership in the Nineties

By
RONNIE GARNER, M.P.A.

On a hot, lazy afternoon, a small boy sits barefoot under a shade tree, idly watching a small stream of water from a sprinkler trickle down the street toward him. As tiny rivulets inch their way along the asphalt gutter, they seem to pause at each pebble to build momentum and then push forward again.

Eagerly, the boy grabs handfuls of dirt and builds a small dike that momentarily halts the flow. However, the water slowly wells up in a puddle and edges its way around the barrier. The boy adds

more dirt, vainly attempting to outflank and contain the water.

As the battle progresses, it becomes apparent that despite the boy's best efforts, he will never prevail. There are larger forces of nature at work.

How often do organizations struggle in a like manner against the forces of human nature? An organization is, after all, a large pool of human resources. Not unlike the stream of water, this pool seeks movement—*progress*. It cannot stand still; that is not the natural order. It must either move forward or stagnate.

What organizations require is guidance of that movement. This guidance comes in the form of direction and leadership.

Visionary leadership is not for everyone. A gnarled police veteran once counseled me to "never try to teach a pig to sing. It sounds like hell and it annoys the pig."

There is some wisdom in that advice. Many police administrators become so preoccupied with current problems that they fail to plan for the future. Some do not believe that strategic planning is worth the effort. Others lack the imagination and creativity required to project in



Deputy Chief Garner serves with the Beverly Hills, California, Police Department.

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the abstract. To ask them to conceptualize the organization 5 years in the future is akin to asking a pig to sing—it only annoys them. For these individuals, the vision of the future must be articulated with such vividness and detail that the abstract becomes concrete.

Organizational Vision

An organizational vision presents a clear picture of what direction the organization plans to take in the future. It should represent an achievable, challenging, and worthwhile long-range target toward which personnel can direct their energies.

For example, one police department's vision statement projects that a mutual understanding of shared problems will result in a high level of confidence and harmony between the police and the community. The statement then specifies that the department and the community will forge a close and consistent partnership to address issues and to solve problems effectively, making

the city a safe, healthy, and attractive place for commerce and community life.

Having a clear understanding of the organizational vision can change an employee's entire perspective. The story is often told of a passer-by who asked a bored bricklayer, "What are you doing?" The bricklayer replied, "I am placing one brick on top of another." The passer-by then asked another bricklayer, who was working with greater enthusiasm, "What are you doing?" The second bricklayer replied, "I am building a magnificent cathedral where hundreds will worship."

To form an analogy, how many officers simply drive around answering radio calls and how many actually make a meaningful contribution to the quality of life in the community by maintaining order and ensuring that justice prevails? To attach real meaning and value to their jobs, employees must understand that they are collectively engaged in a worthwhile endeavor. A clear organizational vision fills this need.

Rowing v. Steering

Articulating the organizational vision and holding it firmly in focus for personnel is a demanding task. Frequently, operational problems divert the attention of administrators from their primary role as leaders. They must ensure, however, that they do not become so involved in *rowing* the boat that they forget to *steer* the boat.

In fact, some organizations shift to systems that separate policy-making from service delivery in order to allow top managers to concentrate on decisionmaking and direction.¹ Those who *steer* must possess the ability to view the whole spectrum of issues and possibilities and then balance competing demands for resources; *rowing* requires individuals who focus on one task, performing it well.²

Unfortunately, law enforcement administrators often become so intent on overseeing the delivery of services that they neglect their primary responsibility—steering. Instead, they should concentrate on a basic steering challenge: Communicating a clear vision of what they hope the organization will become in the future, giving employees a goal to work toward.

While setting such a goal is crucial, leaders must, at the same time, make additional information available to employees. For example, employees need to know how managers plan to meet this goal, what types of conduct are acceptable, and what criteria leaders will use for decisionmaking. Administrators should make this information available to employees through mission and value statements.

Mission Statement

A clear mission statement may be an organization's most important asset. It calls attention to what management believes is important, and it sets goals that align practices with values.³ In addition, it expresses the purpose for which the organization exists, allowing management to set priorities in decisionmaking. In other words, it acts as a guide for the organization. The mission statement of a California police department reads as follows: "The mission of [this department] is to work in partnership with the community to protect life and property, solve neighborhood problems, and enhance the quality of life in our City."

When developing a mission statement, the process of arriving at consensus among leaders can, itself, be a positive experience. It requires a debate of the various attitudes and beliefs existing among organizational leaders and then, finally, agreement on one basic mission.⁴ The final statement should help employees at all levels make decisions.

Values Statement

The values statement declares the moral and ethical qualities to which the organization is committed. For example, values statements often clarify how much significance the organization places on honesty, customer satisfaction, ethical conduct, innovation, teamwork, community awareness, self-directed work, tolerance of dissenting views, and public relations. While the mission statement describes *where* the organization is going, the values statement articulates *how* it will get there. It is a

Examples of Strategic Goals

- Focus departmental resources on the detection and apprehension of criminals, their prosecution, and control, such as developing a career criminal apprehension program
- Manage the traffic flow on city streets in order to lessen vehicle collisions through a program that enhances the patrol division's ability to enforce traffic laws and to respond to neighborhood traffic complaints
- Educate citizens in crime prevention techniques and services that can be useful self-help, crime-fighting tools, to include a Citizens Police Academy to increase community awareness of law enforcement, a Youth and Community Services Unit to provide outreach, delinquency prevention, and drug and gang prevention, and increased participation in neighborhood watch and other crime prevention efforts
- Work in partnership with the entire community to resolve crime-related problems in neighborhoods by establishing drug-free zones in target areas and expanding the Neighborhood Revitalization Program by incorporating the Federal Weed and Seed Program. This also includes expanding the use of problem-oriented policing strategies, decentralizing two-area command structure into a four-area command structure, encouraging community mobilization efforts, and encouraging and forging positive police-public partnerships
- Implement an ongoing strategic planning process to assist the department in managing the future through coordinated programs and activities with other city departments and criminal justice agencies and input from community forums
- Provide a work environment conducive to employee growth and development, while ensuring high-quality, efficient, and cost-effective services through expanded use of volunteers, active recruitment of minority applicants, career development, and training opportunities and upgraded technology
- Continue to improve, with concern and compassion, the quality of service delivered to victims and witnesses of crime with the implementation of a Community Chaplaincy Program and a total quality management culture in the department with a commitment to provide exceptional customer service.

detailed guide of behaviors that management accepts and supports within the organization.

A Positive Framework

The organizational vision, mission statement, and values statement form a framework to support management decisions by attaching reasons to actions. The philosophy, goals, and work standards embodied within these documents provide a basis for decisionmaking within the organization. They are the lodestars by which the organization navigates its course through the uncharted waters of both the present and the future.

Creating this framework for leadership is vital to maintain consistency and direction in the management of the organization. However, this framework alone is not sufficient to attract and motivate employees to achieve the organization's mission. Organizations need to incorporate a final leadership principle—empowerment.

Much like the stream discussed earlier, it is the nature of an organization to change and progress. Individual members of the organization continually develop plans and expectations about their roles. Each creates a personal agenda. It is the confluence of these personal agendas that creates a dynamic undercurrent within organizations. Leaders must channel this undercurrent in order to accomplish the organization's objectives.

The cumbersome, monolithic organizational structures in which many agencies currently labor do not allow leaders sufficient latitude to channel individual talents. A more open, flexible participative

model must be used so that leaders can successfully empower subordinates.

Empowerment

Empowerment is enabling others to participate in the process of change within the organization. It often involves sharing power with subordinates and allowing them sufficient leeway to accomplish tasks in their own way.

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Empowerment is the most effective way to gain the active participation of others. When employees are truly empowered to make meaningful decisions and effect appropriate change within the organization, they develop a stake in the system—a franchise. Enfranchised and empowered employees have a vested interest in the success of the group. They become important members of a team with a meaningful purpose.

Most individuals want to believe they are contributing to a common purpose and that they are not consumed with pointless exercises. Leaders who promote such an atmosphere secure the commitment

and trust of employees.⁵ True leadership involves providing a collaborative atmosphere, where all workers focus on the critical work of the organization.⁶

However, some leaders resist sharing power. They fear that subordinates, if not sufficiently controlled, may take over the organization. Although there may be some rationality to this fear, establishing a positive leadership framework ensures that employees are both motivated and unified in achieving the organizational mission. By focusing on vision, mission, and values, an enlightened leader empowers and energizes subordinates toward the attainment of organizational objectives.

Conclusion

The issue of leadership in law enforcement is neither broad nor obscure. It involves the concrete process of articulating the vision, mission, and values of the organization within the context of a long-range strategic plan and giving impetus to that plan by empowering subordinates. Without this base, police managers serve only as custodians of a bureaucracy that preoccupies itself with the present at the expense of the future. ♦

Endnotes

¹ Ted Gaebler and David Osborne, *Reinventing Government* (Reading, Massachusetts: Addison-Wesley Publishing Company, 1992), 35.

² Ibid.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Burt Nanus, *The Leader's Edge: Seven Keys to Leadership in a Turbulent World* (Chicago, Illinois: Contemporary Books, Inc., 1989).

⁶ Ibid.