STRATEGIES AVAILABLE TO ENHANCE FUTURE HIRING, RETENTION, AND PROMOTION OF FEMALE OFFICERS WITHIN THE CALIFORNIA HIGHWAY PATROL

Article

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Introduction

Picture in your mind some twenty five years ago, a young woman entering the California Highway Patrol (CHP) Academy for the first time in the Department's history. Some months earlier, Senate Bill 1859 was introduced in the California State Legislature which ultimately mandated the CHP to conduct a two year study to determine the feasibility of employing women as regular State Traffic Officers. The study was required by Section 2266 of the California Vehicle Code and was entitled the "Women Traffic Officer Project."[1]

On September 30, 1974, the California Highway Patrol (CHP) employed forty one women under the special classification entitled Traffic Officer, California Highway Patrol, and limited the employment to a maximum of two years. On January 16, 1975, twenty seven females successfully graduated from the Academy, along with thirty males. For twenty one months each female Traffic Officer's performance was carefully evaluated. The evaluation phase included the sixteen week Academy training phase, as well as performance in the field. On June 18, 1976, those females employed under the Women Traffic Officer Project were reclassified to State Traffic Officer and joined the ranks of their male counterparts.

As the CHP enters the new millennium, strategies available to enhance the hiring, retention, and promotion of female officers should include both short term and long term solutions. The intake, retention and promotion of females in the CHP must be viewed as a complete cycle that requires constant maintenance and focus on the issues specifically related to women in law enforcement.

This effort will be complicated by factors not previously considered in a non male dominated occupation. As competition among law enforcement agencies to find qualified women

for entry level positions continues, the critical factor will be to focus not just on a single portion of the hiring cycle but rather the entire process as a whole.

Overview

A comparison of today's available gender profile statistics with gender profile statistics gathered in 1993 provides insight into the CHP's effort towards hiring, retention, and promoting females within the uniformed ranks[2] (Note: Uniformed is a word used by the CHP when referring to a member who has peace officer status.) This information follows in Table 1.1.

Profile Statistics

	1998		1993	
	Total	Women	Total	Women
Sworn Members	6503	548	5814	499
Deputy Chiefs	17	0	14	0
Assistant Chiefs	26	0	21	0
Captains	89	5	85	1
Lieutenants	207	15	182	4
Sergeants	734	54	604	13
Officers	5430	474	4896	481

Table 1.1

In 1993, approximately 8.5% of females made up the total uniformed work force of the CHP as compared to 8.4% in 1998. This decrease, ever so slight, is still a decrease. Statistics also indicate the CHP has increased its total uniformed strength approximately 11% between 1993 and 1998. During this six year period, only 7% of the total uniformed positions added to the CHP's overall strength were women.[3]

Though women have not yet reached into the upper echelons of management, there have been significant increases within the middle management/supervisory ranks. Over a period of six years (1993-1998), the percentage of uniformed women moving into the management/supervisory ranks are reflected through the following figures:

- Captain positions have realized an increase of approximately 400 %
- Lieutenant positions approximately 275%
- Sergeant positions approximately 300%

In summation, cumulative female representation above the rank of officer is comprised of approximately 5.6% captains, 7.2% lieutenants, and 7.3% sergeants.[4]

What is alarming is the decrease in the amount of women holding entry level positions. A cursory look at the statistics indicate the CHP has made significant gains in promoting women within the uniformed ranks; however, ground has been lost in the female officer pool from which promotions are made. Statistics for management and supervisory positions increased significantly from approximately 3.6% in 1993, as compared to 13.5 % in 1998. Officer positions decreased from approximately 9.6% to 8.4%. So why the decrease? Statistics reveal only 7% of the total uniformed positions added to the CHP's overall strength were women. The trends reflected in these figures might be answered by analyzing the current job market.[5]

Individuals enter a career in law enforcement for a variety of reasons. Many enter public safety careers not just for the salary and benefits but also have a desire to work in a community service oriented profession. Though public safety has been viewed as a male dominated field, more and more women are entering the law enforcement profession. In fact, studies have shown women are more prone to the collaborative style best associated with the Community Oriented Policing(COPS) model adopted by most law enforcement agencies today.

In keeping with the COPS model, the CHP has embraced a philosophy of High Performance Policing to provide leadership in 1998 and into the 21st Century.[6] High Performance Policing is a phrase coined by the CHP to encompass both the COPS model and as a means for carrying out the CHP's mission by establishing the foundation for a bottom up approach for serving the public. Understanding the community and its needs is a must if the CHP is going to succeed in meeting future demands for services. Females at all ranks within the CHP play an integral part in the High Performance Policing model.

Most law enforcement organizations' methods of hiring, retaining, and promoting individuals are fragmented. Each is approached as a separate entity independent of one another. Organizations constantly find themselves in a reactive mode concentrating their efforts on hiring qualified applicants only when the immediate need exists. Retention and promotional opportunities are seldom tied into the hiring cycle as a means to attract and retain qualified individuals over time.

For an organization to be competitive in today's job market, it must understand why individuals leave the organization early. The traditional approach is to focus short term to satisfy an immediate need through quick hiring versus focusing long term by implementing innovative ways to retain employees. This is not say organizations should not look to the short term fix. Rather, they should also look to the development and implementation of long-term plans to counter a problematic future of unwanted attrition if they are to stay competitive for qualified applicants.

The applicant pool is drying up. A recent shortage of qualified entry level applicants, has sparked the CHP into a statewide recruitment campaign. The Department is no stranger to shortages of qualified applicants, especially targeted focus groups on the basis of race and gender.

The CHP continues to find themselves in a reactive mode looking to hire qualified applicants. Today's methods used to hire qualified applicants will satisfy the immediate need but without long term planning, the CHP will be in constant struggle to be competitive for the most qualified applicants available.

Approaching the issue of what the CHP can do to enhance the hiring, retention, and promotional opportunities for females within the uniformed ranks by the year 2009 must be looked at as a whole and not in three fragmented pieces. Long term planning must be strategic in that it must tie together methods encompassing the hiring, retention, and promotion opportunities for women. Focus must be placed not just a single portion of the hiring cycle but rather the entire process as a whole.

Aggressive campaigns to reach out to enhance the hiring of women must be a constant and not looked at as a short term process to satisfy an immediate need. An organization must look to understand the following:

- What initially draws a woman towards a career in law enforcement?
- What causes a woman to leave her law enforcement career early?
- What significant role does a woman play within each level of the organization?

Only when the effort to truly understand the issues of hiring, retention, and promotion of women are seriously explored, will successful long term strategies be developed to enhance the number of females within all uniformed ranks. The degree of proactive measures taken by the CHP to enhance the retention of females should correlate with the ability of the Department to attract qualified candidates to increase the uniformed ranks among females. One can speculate; therefore, that many of the same strategies used to enhance retention will also attract qualified applicants and increase the number of women available for promotional opportunities.

The following strategies should be considered for implementation to enhance the hiring, retention, and promotional opportunities for female officers within the CHP:

- Train all female uniformed managers/supervisors to serve as Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) Counselors, investigators and trainers.
- Develop individual Division/Area recruitment programs which involve all uniformed female employees in the recruitment process.
- Use female uniformed managers/supervisors in the initial stages of cadet Academy training and field training to serve as role models and mentors for female officers.
- Maximize public exposure of uniformed females through use of the media.
- Place uniformed females in positions which maximize public exposure.
- Conduct a comprehensive study to identify why females leave the Department.
- Conduct a comprehensive evaluation of the failure rate of females from the Department's testing, background, and training process.
- Use the Department's Explorer Program to maximize hiring efforts.
- Develop a mentoring program for young female officers to assist in their career development.
- Revise existing permissive reinstatement policy to extend the time frames in which uniformed employees may return to the Department.
- Develop a job share program within the uniformed ranks.
- Provide a stipend for day care/baby sitting.
- Enact legislation to raise the maximum age limit for entry level hiring of uniformed positions.

- Re-evaluate existing Academy Physical Performance Test to ensure validity, relevancy, and job relatedness.
- Accept lateral transfers.

Recommendations

The following recommendations should be considered when implementing transformational change to increase the intake of female officers at all ranks within an organization. This list of recommendations is in no way to meant to be all inclusive and should be viewed as guide to individual organizations.

- The leader should become familiar with emerging issues regarding women in law enforcement.
- The leader should understand the strategic planning process.
- The leader should develop and implement a strategic plan designed to enhance the needs and goals of the organization.
- The leader should serve as the transition manager.
- The transition manager and members of the development team should be familiar with the need for increasing the number of female officers and what it can do for an organization
- The leader should conduct a critical mass analysis on both the internal and external environments relative to the issue of increasing the number of female officers.
- The leader should develop a plan to market the change and create ownership among development team members.
- The leader should develop a business plan that will meet both short term and long term goals of the hiring cycle.

- The leader should develop a set of controls to monitor and/or evaluate the strategies implemented to increase the hiring, retention, and promotion of female officers.

Conclusions

Increasing the intake of female officers at all levels is a part of the change process. A law enforcement leader must be prepared to serve as the catalyst in creating change. It will be incumbent upon a leader to understand what direction he/she wants the organization to go. In other words, a leader must be a visionary. A law enforcement leader must fully articulate his/her vision to other command staff, as well as be versed in the facilitation of the change process. Communicating the vision and setting clearly defined goals that are timely, achievable, and organized, will ensure the desired change.

The ability to implement change is more often than not deeply influenced by the culture of the organization. We cannot fully understand the concept of creating and implementing change with the hope of increasing the number of females officers within all ranks without fully appreciating its linkage to organizational culture. Consider the following statement when attempting understand culture:

> One way to understand culture is to conceptualize an organization as a tree. In this organizational tree, the root's are the corporation's culture. These roots, of course, are below the surface, invisible. But they give rise to the trunk, branches, and leaves-the visible parts of the tree.[7]

In other words, to implement real change, it must become a part of the organizational culture. It must begin under the surface within the very roots of an organization.

In conclusion, female officers play an integral part of a law enforcement organization. Law enforcement organizations must take an innovative stance in implementing long term planning strategies to enhance hiring, retention and promotion of females. If strategies remain

status quo then the "quick fix" mind set will continue to prevail. Eventually, the applicant pool will dry up and underutilization of women within the law enforcement field will increase.

Law enforcement leaders cannot continue to vacillate on whether they can afford to implement long term strategies to increase the intake of females within their organizations. Leaders should ask themselves if they can afford not to.

For further information on this topic, please refer to Peace Officer Standards and Training's Command College Class XXVIII Journal Project entitled "What strategies will be available in the year 2009 to enhance the hiring, retention, and promotion of female officers within the California Highway Patrol?"

ENDNOTES

1 Department of the California Highway Patrol, Participation in the Women Traffic Officer Project, 18 June 1976

2 Department of the California Highway Patrol, Ethnic and Gender Profile, December 1992.

3 Department of the California Highway Patrol, Ethnic and Gender Profile, December 1998.

4 Ibid.

5 Ibid.

6 Department of California Highway Patrol, High Performance Policing, January 1998 p.3.

7 R. Roosevelt Thomas, Jr., Beyond Race and Gender, AMACOM, New York, 1992.

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