

***A Fulltime* problem may call for a
Temporary solution**

by

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The Command College Futures Study Project is a FUTURES study of a particular emerging issue of relevance to law enforcement. Its purpose is NOT to predict the future; rather, to project a variety of possible scenarios useful for strategic planning in anticipation of the emerging landscape facing policing organizations.

This journal article was created using the futures forecasting process of Command College and its outcomes. Defining the future differs from analyzing the past, because it has not yet happened. In this article, methodologies have been used to discern useful alternatives to enhance the success of planners and leaders in their response to a range of possible future environments.

Managing the future means influencing it—creating, constraining and adapting to emerging trends and events in a way that optimizes the opportunities and minimizes the threats of relevance to the profession.

The views and conclusions expressed in the Command College Futures Project and journal article are those of the author, and are not necessarily those of the CA Commission on Peace Officer Standards and Training (POST).

A Fulltime problem may call for a Temporary solution

Introduction

It is a pleasant autumn Saturday morning in Anywhere City, California. The clock in the City's testing facility is rapidly approaching 9:00 a.m., the time when the Human Resources Specialist is to begin administering the new-hire police officer test for Anywhere City Police Department. The majority of the seats in the testing venue are still empty, and it does not appear as if any more potential candidates will be gracing the staff with their presence.

The police department recruiting sergeant, rapidly approaching retirement, perplexedly notes, "I just don't get it. My staff and I have been working our tails off attending job fairs, recruiting at colleges, doing radio and television spots, sending out flyers; all to fill our vacancies, and yet again it's just another crummy turnout!" Disheartened, she continues, "It's not like our pay is bad, we lead the area in salary and benefits. We have great special assignment and promotion opportunities, and our patrol officers only have to work three days a week." As the sergeant woefully shakes her head, the Human Resources Specialist stands to address the applicants and consolingly replies to the sergeant, "It sure isn't like the old days; we used to have to turn them away at the door."

While a dramatization, similar scenarios are being played out weekly in cities throughout the State of California and the country. Kenneth O'Brien, the former Executive Director of California's Commission on Peace Officers Standards and Training (POST) noted, "Recruiting qualified applicants to become peace officers has been a

recurring concern to California law enforcement. However, in no time in the past has the concern been so great nor the future so uncertain as it is today” (California POST, 2006, Recruitment & Retention Best Practices Update, Preface).

Why is it you can never find a Cop when you need one?

“Between 2002 and 2012, the state [California] projects an estimated 68,000 peace officers will need to be hired with an estimated 30,300 as a result of separation.”
(California POST, 2006, Recruitment & Retention Best Practices Update, p. vii).

Obviously, a dilemma has surfaced within the field of law enforcement, and it has the potential to reach epidemic proportions within the very near future. The problem, which is metastasizing daily, is the inability of law enforcement organizations to find, and recruit, qualified applicants to fill the vastly growing void within the profession.

Jurkanin, Fischer, and Sergevnin, in their White Paper entitled, *Fishing in a Shallow Pool: Police Recruitment* (2001) noted, “[law enforcement] agencies are discovering that demographic and economic changes have resulted in a dwindling pool of qualified candidates. In many instances, applicant pools are down over 50% from a few years ago” (p. 4). The reason for these workforce shortages are multifaceted and need to be examined to fully understand this dynamic. Some key impacts are the generational impact; private sector opportunities, the long-term impact of 9-11, and changes in the workforce due to retirement benefits and the current mindset of employees. We will look at each of these in greater detail.

Generational Impact:

While law enforcement's workforce void is multifaceted in nature, exploration into generational structure and related workforce ebb and flow can add clarity to the problem. "Presently, American society contains individual members of six generations: the lost generation (born 1883-1900); the GI generation, also known as the greatest generation (1901-1924); the silent generation (1925-1942); the baby boom generation (1943-1960); generation X, also known as the 13'ers or the echo boom generation (1961-1981); and the millennial generation, also known as generation Y (1982-2002). A relatively small number of silent generation members are still active in the workplace" (Henchey, 2005, p.3). The largest of the generations, the *baby boomers*, are retiring or rapidly approaching retirement age. Generation X is already at work in law enforcement, yet their numbers are relatively insignificant in comparison and cannot fill the abyss created by baby boomers leaving the workplace. This is where the millennial generation comes into play. The millennial generation, which is entering, or will be entering, the world of law enforcement, will be tasked with filling that gap.

Private Sector Opportunities:

In the past those in the workforce coveted employment opportunities in the public sector. Such jobs provided fair salaries, security, good benefits, and most importantly a retirement plan. Former police officer, and current police labor attorney Ronald G. DeLord (2006) noted, "A strong economy provides better paying jobs in the private sector..." (pp.3-4). Jurkanin, Fischer, and Sergevnin (2001) echoed this sentiment when they quoted Dr. Larry Hoover as observing, "Government employment, in this case, law

enforcement offers security. In good economic times, other jobs in the private sector might offer more attractive salaries (p. 2). It is no secret that many have flourished as a result of our recent economy. Merrill Lynch's 2007 World Wealth Report noted, "9.5 million people globally hold more than 1 million [U.S. dollars] in financial assets, an increase of 8.3% over 2005" (Merrill Lynch, World Wealth Report 2007, p. 3). While current trends may point to economic decline, many potential law enforcement officers have deviated away from the public sector, to seek lucrative opportunities in the private realm.

September 11 2001:

The ramifications of September 11, 2001 continue to haunt our country. Not only are our citizens more sensitive to the negative impacts of terrorism worldwide, the collection of would-be, local law enforcement candidates has dwindled as a result. This dilemma is two-pronged. Baltimore Sun reporter Josh Mitchell (2007) noted, "Finding qualified police recruits has become much tougher since the September 11 terror attacks, police officials say, as the expansion of federal law enforcement has created more options for people interested in the field...Applicants are applying to multiple agencies now, everybody's competing for that same small group of applicants" (p. A2). While there are more diverse job options within the field, there is another problem that looms largely over the process to recruit potential officers since September 11th. We are faced with the fact that our military is bulked up and repeatedly extending the service commitment of soldiers who might otherwise become police officers (DeLord, 2006, p. 4). Diversity in

law enforcement, military augmentation, counter terrorist offenses in the Middle East, and the war in Iraq has adversely impacted law enforcement recruitment problem.

Retirement Benefit Changes:

Changes to emergency service worker retirement systems have created yet another quandary. Baby Boomers are retiring at breakneck rates. Accelerating the predicament, many agencies within California, and other parts of the nation, have gone to retirement plans that allow for individuals to retire at a younger age with optimal financial gain. These retirement packages are not only adding to the vacancy problems, but more troubling, are causing organizations to lose tremendous amounts of experience and expertise. In California, the Public Employees Retirement System (PERS) three percent at age fifty plan has created havoc. Officers and supervisors alike are retiring earlier than in the past. This adds to the exodus of personnel, but also forces many premature promotions just to satisfy supervisor and leadership staffing levels left unfilled by early retirement.

Changing Workforce Mindset:

Workforce expectation and entitlement is another factor that has played a role in the lack of interest in the field of law enforcement. Employees today seem to shy away from the structured, semi-militaristic composition of policing organizations. When speaking about young people entering into the field of law enforcement, DeLord (2006) cited, “The fact of the matter is that law enforcement agencies are selling a product few young people are buying...The truth is that 99% of all police work is stressful, potentially

dangerous, boring for long periods of time, under-appreciated, overly-regulated, micro-managed, seniority driven, bureaucratic, heavily disciplined, 24/7 shift work, little time off from work, premature death, and high rates of alcoholism, divorce, and suicide. More importantly, operational police work is not always viewed by the media and public as the best professional job choice by young people...Their lives are not work-centered and they want more out of a job than the promise of a 30-year pension. They need to feel like they will be included in decision-making, be recognized for their achievements, and have flexible work schedules” (pp. 4-5). It is evident that many young people within the workforce are not at all attracted to the field, and to recruit those that may be slightly inquisitive, significant changes may have to be made.

Thinking outside the law enforcement box

“Build a better mousetrap and the world will beat a path to your door.”

Ralph Waldo Emerson

Change is certain, and it is obvious that the historical approach that law enforcement has employed to recruit employees has missed the mark. For law enforcement to successfully address the chasm created by the noted recruitment and employment issues, attention should likely be directed away from conventional practices and diverted to methods the private sector continually uses to confront similar problems. The private sector is at an advantage as they can deploy recruiting tactics that are unfeasible by public sector entities. For example, an architecture, engineering, and construction field (AEC) service provider, ZweighWhite, advocates offering profit sharing, performance bonuses, and signing and retention bonuses to recruit qualified employees (Zweig White, 2007

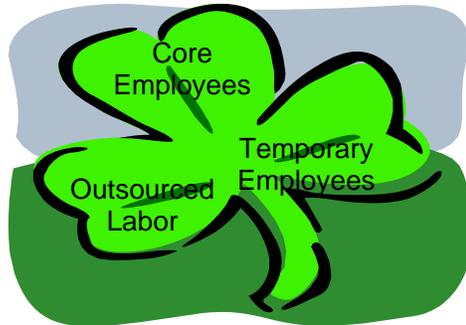
Incentives Compensation Survey, on-line). It is true that law enforcement agencies have tried to venture in that direction by offering signing bonuses, relocation pay and incentives, longevity contracts, and higher salary and benefit packages; however these attempts did not address the root problem, a very limited employee candidate pool.

The Shamrock Organization – Is it Law Enforcement’s “Better Mousetrap?”

With workers leaving our country to compete in a global market, many big businesses forecasted the workforce shortages that have the law enforcement community on the brink of calamity. However, instead of trying to place a futile bandage on a gushing hemorrhage (as was the case with most law enforcement agencies) numerous successful private businesses transitioned to a non-traditional model to combat workforce shortages and stay economically sound. Those competitive organizations embraced the *Shamrock Organizational Design*, as depicted by Charles Handy many years before the problem reached epidemic proportions. Handy (1989), stated, “The [Shamrock] organization is based on a core of essential, key executives who have skills and capabilities to move the company forward. These [core] people are supported in their efforts by outside, interim contractors...temporary people, or task workers, who may be brought in through temporary service agencies” (p.32).

The Shamrock Organization, as described by Charles Handy and widely utilized by private sector companies, visually resembles a three leafed clover (shamrock). The model is comprised of three separate, but intertwined entities each representing a single leaf of the shamrock: core employees, outsourced labor, and temporary workers. If you

examine most law enforcement agencies you will find that most already incorporate two of the three leaves, the core employees and outsourced labor.



Within law enforcement, as in most organizations, you can easily spot the core employees. They are those workers that drive the organization, keep it functioning daily at a proficient level, and complete additional tasks so as to make sure all needs of the department are met. You will also discover employees that perform at the minimally acceptable level and never go beyond what is expected of them. Finally, in today's climate, and unquestionably in the future, you will find many vacant positions throughout the ranks. The *Shamrock Organizational Model* addresses the employee dynamic, modifies the structure for a leaner workforce, higher in quality, with increased productivity, and substantial cost savings.

Most Law enforcement agencies have embraced the concept of outsourcing labor, a key element and step toward the *Shamrock Organization*. Today it is commonplace for departments to contract with evidence laboratories, jail operation firms, prisoner transport companies, evidence processors, internal affairs investigators, independent auditors, and legal consultants just to name a few. These supplemental providers have stepped into roles that in the past, most law enforcement agencies would specifically hire, train, and

invest a great deal of resources. Frequently, these agencies would use police officers to fill such positions, which lacked specific expertise, or required costly training to become semi-proficient. Eventually, law enforcement realized that through outsourcing they could increase competency with budgetary savings.

The Missing Link - The Temporary Employee:

The success of the Shamrock Organization is dependant on a myriad of interconnected facets working congruently. While significance cannot be placed on one aspect over another, the temporary employee plays an integral role in the organization's overall achievement. Today, temporary employees are not just relegated to menial tasks; "The use of temporary help has enjoyed an upward growth ever since entrepreneur William Russell Kelly opened the first temporary staffing agency in 1946...Such employees can infuse an organization with highly sophisticated skill sets, enable a business to adjust at a moments notice to workload fluctuations, provide stable staffing levels, can save valuable time and money, and is a valuable resource for potential permanent recruitment decisions" (Schaefer, 2007). Contemporary law enforcement agencies have two of the three components of the *Shamrock Organization* already in place. The missing *Shamrock* leaf, the temporary worker, may solve the problem of workforce shortages, retention, and employee mediocrity. The temporary employee can augment core employees to meet staffing needs, enhance service to the community, and can be easily released based upon performance deficiencies, lack of efficiency, and departmental demands.

Examining the Shamrock by field experts

In May of 2007, a panel of experts convened in Fontana, California to deliberate the future impact of implementing the *Shamrock Organization Model*. They specifically focused on the possibility of hiring temporary police officer employees to fill vacancies in the law enforcement field (NGT Panel, 2007). This panel consisted of a human resources specialist, a regional manager from Kelley Services, a temporary employee from Kelley Services, an elementary school district assistant superintendent, a private consultant / auditor, a police captain, a police officer association president, and a civilian employee union representative. They identified several areas in law enforcement where temporary police officer employees may be considered a valuable commodity. The subject areas were concentrated, and substantial time was spent fettering out the feasibility and impact. The panel concluded their work with observations and recommendations in the following areas:

- Filling Police Staffing Voids
- Nomadic Employees Problems
- Increased Health and Retirement Benefits
- The Early Retirement Abyss
- Community Service

Filling Police Staffing Voids:

The panel felt that utilizing temporary police officers may be a significant tool for recruiting individuals to fill those numerous empty police officer positions that seem to be commonplace throughout the industry. The panel noted that police and sheriff's

departments could employ temporary police officers and assess the temporary officer's work performance. If the temp was a hard worker, fit the mold of the department, and met all hiring standards, the agency could elect to offer them a permanent position. The Human Resources Specialist referred to the concept as "A police officer test-drive."

The panel believed the theory of staffing permanent positions with proven temporary police officers was a plausible and beneficial endeavor not only for the law enforcement agency, but for the temporary police officers. Members of the panel felt that the temporary police officer model was advantageous to the temporary officer as they could utilize the temp structure and system to investigate different departments, organizational cultures, and geographical locations prior to putting down roots. All believed that the temporary system would be a perfect tool for both parties as a scouting and reconnaissance mission prior to making a long term commitment.

Nomadic Employee Problems:

The panel comprised of individuals primarily from the Baby Boomer generation with a couple of Generation X participants, made some very interesting observations related to the Millennial employees currently replacing the droves of retiring Baby Boomers. The Assistant Superintendent of Schools noted that the Millennial workers are very diligent in their duties; however, it was his experience that very few of them show any real desire to make long term commitments to their employer. He stated that the Millennial employee seemed to be more concerned with instant career gratification rather than what their futures would look like in several years. The Human Resources Specialist shared a similar view, noting the younger employees [Millennial's] do not stay with an

organization for an extended period of time. They may opt to leave as soon as a more intriguing opportunity, not necessarily more lucrative one, arrived.

The temporary employee noted that the once commonplace standard of working hard for one organization, moving up the company ladder, and then retiring is a value of the past. He advised that many of the employees he has come in contact with through the temporary agency are young, very bright, educated individuals that prefer to work for temporary agencies as they get bored in one place. He stated that many of them have no desire to find permanent employment. They want to travel while they are young and have as many experiences in different places as possible before they settle down. He stated that some of the temporary employees have had stable employment elsewhere, but decided to try new work in a different setting. This “grass is greener” trend does not seem to relate specifically to geographic change, but a desire to find a better organizational fit, better pay, or a change for the sake of alleviating boredom.

This itinerant model demonstrated by many young people appeared as a perfect fit for the temporary police officer employee. The *Shamrock Model* would allow those individuals that have a desire to work as officers, who are also nomadic in nature, the opportunity to serve. For example, a temporary officer who desired to be close to the beach in the summer, and near the mountains in the winter, would be able to fill employment gaps and assist law enforcement agencies in those areas.

Increased Health and Retirement Benefits:

The Regional Manager for Kelly Services indicated that temporary employees traditionally do not receive health and retirement benefits from their employers. The

panel felt that one of the primary advantages to the *Shamrock Model* related to the savings that could be garnered from not having to provide such benefits. By outsourcing services and employing a significant number of temporary employees, a police department could save substantially as costs for such benefits continue to skyrocket. It was the common belief that temporary police officers could be offered a good wage, departments could provide enhanced services to the community, all while increasing their fiscal stability through benefits savings.

Early Retirement Abyss:

A significant benefit provided to many permanent police officer employees is the ability to retire after twenty years of service or at age fifty. Many police departments within the California Public Employees Retirement System (PERS) offer the three percent at age fifty benefit. This allows officers to retire at a fairly young age, and ultimately depleted departments of a substantial number of officers and associated experience and expertise. The panel felt that younger temporary police officers could infuse a department with help, while the seasoned retirees, who are retiring younger, might be an ideal group of individuals to supplement the temporary police officer hiring pool. Retired police officers who return as temps would be extremely useful and could monetarily enhance their pensions. The panel viewed the use of retired cops as temps to be a win-win for all involved. The departments could tap into the retired temporary police officers knowledge base and hire them to work in specialized fields, while boosting their retirement.

Community Service:

The panel concluded that today, communities expect more from their police officers than just arresting violators and patrolling businesses and residential neighborhoods. The panel felt that communities expect officers to solve problems through the use of collaboration and technology. The temporary police officer model would allow departments the opportunity to enhance staffing levels at specific times based on necessity, and apply specific skills to targeted areas. For instance, if a community was having a huge event that required considerable resources to staff, then they could call in a contingent of temporary police officers to handle the affair. Similarly, if a community was plagued with a specific crime related problem, temporary officers with expertise related to that problem could be deployed to solve the matter. Temporary police officer alternatives would go a long way toward servicing the community.

Conclusions

Law enforcement is in a very precarious position related to recruitment and retention of police officers, and it could be argued that there is no relief in the foreseeable future. The *Shamrock Organization Model* may be able to provide some aid by blending core employees, outsourced services, and the ever important temporary employees. Temporary officers enable a law enforcement organization the ability to immediately ease staffing shortages, remain fiscally sound by eliminating problems related to increased benefits costs, solve community problems by rapidly and specifically directing resources, and enhance overall efficiency and effectiveness through instantaneous replacement of substandard performers. The *Shamrock Model* and the temporary police

officer employee may be the lucky charm needed to solve law enforcement's recruitment and retention woes.

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