

**LEADERSHIP
THE SECURITY BLANKET WE ALL NEED**

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).

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Don't let this happen to you.....

Chief Smith woke up in the morning and drove to his favorite local Starbucks that, among hundreds of other businesses in the area, is served by the Police Department he leads. Chief Smith walked into the Starbucks and immediately sensed a change in mood. You see, normally when he enters, he is greeted with smiles, jovial greetings and comments, and generally feels like a well-liked and respected member of his community. This particular morning he was faced with frowns, subdued conversation and a sense of uncomfortable nervousness. He happened to glance down at the local newspaper rack where he found his explanation. The paper's headline read: "Police Officers Corrupt." He read on...

Nineteen police officers have been charged with staging home robberies to steal drugs, money and weapons, prosecutors said.

The defendants are charged with committing more than 20 robberies and burglaries over the last year while on duty, arriving in police cars and wearing Westmont Police Department badges.

They handcuffed, threatened and assaulted their victims and in one case hit a man with a Taser gun, prosecutors said. When the raids did not yield the anticipated drugs, prosecutors said, they stole any items of value, sold them and split the profits.

The area U.S. Attorney's office said the officers will be indicted by a federal grand jury this week and the other thirteen will be charged over the next two years with civil rights, narcotics and weapons violations. The Chief of Police will likely be among those charged civilly.

According to the indictments, the police robbery crew stole 600 pounds of marijuana in one burglary and in another nabbed television sets from a truck. In one case, two officers robbed a man outside a store of \$45,000 worth of pseudoephedrine pills that are used to make methamphetamines.

"The depth of corruption and audacity among these law enforcement officers is nothing less than stunning," the U.S. Attorney said.

This scenario actually played out on the national front within the last five years.

When it did, some news agencies attributed the corruption to lack of leadership within the ranks, particularly at the officer level (American Chronicle.com, 3/10/06 Jim Kouri, CPP).

Chief Joe Polisar of the Garden Grove Police Department expresses a sentiment that might directly address ways to resolve chronic issues with deficient officer conduct in the field; leadership development for newer officers.

Polisar is a staunch supporter of early leadership training for police officers. He states that, although there are some efforts in California to present leadership training to recruits in police academies, one of the challenges facing many police executives is leadership development, particularly for new line-level personnel with less than a year on the job. Chief Polisar further states, "Past and present law enforcement executives have taken few steps within their organizations to develop training programs aimed at systematically developing new officer leaders in depth." To change outcomes, we must look to change process. One major area of improvement is to integrate leadership development training into the early stages of a peace officer's career. To do so is not only beneficial, but could dynamically alter the way in which they perform their duties for their entire career.

Why do we need more to be done?

A comprehensive leadership training program aimed at officers having less than a year on the job is critical because failure to cultivate such a program hinders the new officer's personal growth, ethical decision making, and problem resolution skills. As noted by a number of observers on the issue, implementing newer-officer leadership training would also help mitigate concerns regarding the capacity for teamwork, operational efficiency, appropriate use of power, tolerance of job-related stress, and trust between the public and officers.

Jeff Travis, Lieutenant with the Bell Gardens Police Department and member of the CPOA Ethics and Standards Leadership Training Committee says, "Training first year police officers about complex leadership philosophies is critical to early organizational culture molding and ultimately to a solid ethical foundation." Mitch Waller, Chief of Police of the Westminster Police Department echoes this sentiment. He states, "We really need a training program that teaches rookie officers intricate leadership concepts in order to begin molding them early on as opposed to later when it may be too late." Those who study policing tend to agree.

State University of New York, Professor Edward Thibault, teaches in their Criminal Justice Department. Dr. Thibault supports a philosophy that a comprehensive leadership training program aimed at rookie officers is critical because limited steps to cultivate such a program might result in an officer's lack of personal growth, poor ethical decision making, and weak problem resolution skills (Thibault, 2001). Lacking such training, newer officers can inadvertently exacerbate issues of poor teamwork, operational inefficiency, misuse of power, increased stress levels, and mistrust by the

public. Thibault asserts there has also been a challenge among law enforcement executives about the best ways to develop and implement leadership training for officers that will benefit departments in the future. “The focus of police training courses today remains directed at present day new line level personnel concerning operational skills, and not towards executive leadership development” (Thibault, 2001). Dr. Thibault suggests that it is never too soon to begin leadership training, and that the sooner concepts of leadership can be taught early on in an officer’s career, the potential for more ethical officers will be increased.

Major John Coleman, in his book *Operational Mid-Level Management for Police*, concurs with Dr. Thibault’s assertion that leadership development must begin early in an officer’s career. According to Major Coleman, within any leadership training program geared towards new line level law enforcement personnel, it is critical to present and explain a wide range of concepts and police related leadership philosophies early on. Although not complete solutions to the problems of police corruption, Coleman emphasizes it would be highly beneficial to introduce some of the following concepts to rookie officers (Coleman, 2002):

- An effective leadership training program geared towards new officers to introduce concepts and theories of leadership, and recognize the complexity and intrinsic nature of leadership
- Brief lectures and group discussions on differences perceived between a manager and leader, and pose questions to new officers about what job functions fall within the major titles of management and leadership

- Asking new officers to think of the best leader they have ever personally known, and that person's most outstanding qualities. Conversely, discussions of the "worst" leaders should also ensue
- In addition, the concept of inherited traits should be discussed, involving whether a person is born into leadership or learns it (Northouse, 2004)

Extending on concepts offered by Ira Chaleff in *The Courageous Follower*, a critical component of new officer training would also be how power and loyalty relate to personal value systems. Personal values define character. Values impact every aspect of a person's life including personal and work behaviors, interactions with family, friends and co-workers; personal [decision-making](#) processes and the direction a person takes in life are also critical.

Chaleff further illustrates concepts that support the idea that new officers should participate in general discussions as to the meaning of loyalty, and misdirected loyalties. Training should explain that one must always weigh loyalty decisions against other higher loyalties such as values, and should explain how loyalties mirror value systems, and sometimes require viewing issues from a wider perspective to resolve problems successfully. Training should focus on the concept that trust is a mutual bond, beginning with the leader's displayed instinctive belief in the value of others to do their jobs in line with communicated organizational goals, missions, and values (Chaleff, 2003).

William L. Richter, criminal justice professor at Kansas State University, teaches leadership ideals that support the concept that new officers should understand how the issues of integrity and ethics relate to leadership, and what causes ethics and integrity to

deteriorate. Richter notes that officers with less than a year on the job should understand that passively permitting corruption as opposed to actively confronting it is employing the “Code of Silence.” Police training in general should incorporate an explanation of what the “Code of Silence” is, and reasons for it. In addition, it is important to teach the nexus between the code of silence and trust, perspective, development of power, demand for excellence, and courage (Richter, 1990).

Christopher Dreisbach, Ph.D. with John Hopkins University Department of Public Safety Leadership states, “Since virtue is about habit, as much as it is about knowing and doing the good, a police agency should do everything it can to inculcate this habit in its officers from the beginning of their contact--that is, from their first day in the academy. This should be reinforced through theory and practice from then on. Any FTO program that fails either to start early enough or to promote virtue adequately, fails to teach leadership. At that point the hope is that the officer will benefit from other forms of training or will be a natural leader requiring no formal training, but to act merely on this hope is too high a gamble for the agency” (Dreisbach, 2010).

According to Professor Lawrence Lynch with Onondaga Community College of Criminal Justice, new officer leadership training should teach that power in law enforcement is derived from a number of sources. In his book *Proactive Police Management*, Lynch states that the focus of police training for new officers is focused at operational tactics, and not leadership development. Lynch asserts that teaching values to new officers is important; if a new officer’s value system deteriorates, so will his associated power as seen by other new officers. Of monumental importance is how the

power is maintained by the individual new officer. As long as the power is maintained through a high value stance, the impact may not be dodged through basic choice as is the case with influence (Lynch, 1998). Certainly, Lynch and others concur that every officer is truly a leader, thus formal training in that regard should be a requisite part of the officer's initial training.

Some possible struggles to have in mind

Realistically, limitations of line level rookie leadership training are affected by time constraints, budget pitfalls, and officer interest levels. Each police agency will face differing degrees of limitations, and training opportunities have to be evaluated independently. Most police executives will undoubtedly struggle with budgetary limitations, scheduling concerns and certifying any program to ensure it meets standards of quality necessary to deliver such training. The task though, is well worth it.

Officers who participate in early officer leadership training programs will gain skills that will help them correlate relationships between personal and organizational principles and values, exercise greater leadership in personal and professional activities, increase personal ethics with individuals and groups to accomplish more value based organizational goals, analyze issues from multiple perspectives, develop increased self-confidence and confidence in the ability of others, provide support and development for peers and subordinates, recognize and address areas of personal improvement, and effectively integrate management skills and leadership qualities.

Where to from here

Consider presenting early leadership training in modular format. Here are some ideas to start with, including some recommended topics as illustrated by experts in the field:

- Module I Concepts of Leadership
- Module II Values in Law Enforcement
- Module III Power and Loyalty Conflicts in Law Enforcement
- Module IV Integrity and Ethics
- Module V Group Dynamics
- Module VI Organizational Change
- Module VII Proactive vs. Reactive Leadership
- Module VIII Personal Goals
- Module IX Formal Education in Police Work and Leadership

Remember, integrating leadership development training into the early stages of a police officer's career will not only be beneficial for the officer and the department, but will also likely dramatically alter the way in which they perform their duties.

Conclusion

So, many experts in the field of management and leadership have illustrated that teaching and explaining to new line-level police officers various leadership concepts early on in their careers will likely reduce dishonesty, stimulate leader qualities and overall personal growth. In addition, such early leadership training will play a critical role in the ability of a mid-size law enforcement organization to establish an effective program that will develop the next generation of law enforcement leaders. Training must emphasize that future success and integrity as a law enforcement leader will be

determined not only by how new officers manage, but also how new officers meet leadership challenges of the future.

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