

A NEW CONCEPTION IN POLICE ORGANIZATIONS
DEPARTMENT OF POLICE
VICTORIA, TEXAS

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The Victoria Police Department reorganized on January 1, 1968, in what to us, is an entirely new concept of police organization. Military ranks within the department were phased out and the police department was organized on a basis of business management. This became necessary because of the continued loss of our trained officers to other departments or who left because they were unable to advance in rank because of no vacancies, or to higher paying jobs in industry.

Under the old system, a man would go to work as a probationary patrolman and after six months of training and probation, he would advance automatically to the rank of patrolman. He remained in the rank of patrolman for a period of years, until such time as a Sergeant vacancy occurred. Then the patrolman would be required to compete with the other patrolmen in getting this particular position.

It is our belief that the man who does the work out in the field, the so-called patrolman, is the backbone of the police operation, and we must retain this man in the police department. We can no longer afford to lose his valuable training and experience. Having been the victim of such a situation at one time in my own career, and being required to resign and enter another department for advancement, I realize the thinking of the officer in this particular instance.

Under our new organization, we have a median classification. Perhaps that is not the proper term, "median classification". It is a professional classification that enables

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the police officer, after he has received his basic training, to continue to advance in responsibility and to advance in compensation without becoming a supervisor. It is our belief that a properly trained police officer does most of his work without supervision anyway, so why make it impossible to go up in responsibility and compensation without advancing to a supervisory position.

The long range aim of our new organization is to provide administrative mechanics through which officers, with proven abilities and preparation, can achieve greater responsibility and increased income which was not possible under the old system.

This new organization was not contemplated by the head of the department alone, nor was it instigated or instituted just for the sake of change. After the President's Commission on Law Enforcement Report was released, the staff and myself studied it very carefully, analyzed the thoughts and ideas, found things we did not agree with, and many things that we did agree with. We then started sending the higher ranking officers, the Captains and Lieutenants, to Business Management School. The Director of Police, Captains and Lieutenants completed a short course in Business Management at the University of Texas. These ranking officers also completed a course in police administration sponsored by the Texas Department of Public Safety and the Texas Police Association, and all completed a course in Police Administration conducted by the Federal Bureau of Investigation at the Public Safety Building in Victoria, Texas.

After this training and research, the Captains, Lieutenants and myself held many staff conferences. The situation was discussed and we talked to other employees in the police department which, ultimately, resulted in a tentative plan. The plan was that a new employee would come into the department at a position, at that time unnamed, and after a period of probation and basic training, this employee would be advanced one step. In the second step, the employee would still be on probation but would have more latitude and responsibility. We wanted to see what he could do on his own initiative with minimal supervision. If after a period of six months, the employee had shown considerable self-improvement and his services were satisfactory for the amount of training and experience he had acquired, he would advance another step, and the same evaluation process would be made there.

After a period of eighteen months of satisfactory service which included selected training and three minor advancements, the employee would advance to the first position in the "professional corps" of the police department. This position would be the end of changing titles or changing of position names. The professional grade has five pay grades. The professional police officer advances in pay grade by self-improvement, satisfactory service and a required number of police training hours, plus college semester hours.

One of the problems we faced was proper names for the new positions created by the reorganization. Military rank

titles were out so far as we were concerned because the new titles were to be more consistent with the business community - this being the result of our training in business management.

Many names and titles were brought into the discussions, but most were discarded. Since the beginning officer is certainly held for a time on probation, the position was named Probationary Employee (PE). At the end of six months period of selected required training and satisfactory service, the Probationary Employee is advanced one step. Since our business ^{is} in public safety, the second position, or the step just above PE, was named Public Safety Officer (PSO). The Public Safety Officer has some training and experience, but actually is still on probation with much to learn and experience to gain.

After a period of eighteen months satisfactory service and extensive selected training, the Public Safety Officer can advance to the grade of Public Safety Technician (PST). This position too was named with our utmost concern in mind, public safety. We felt that Public Safety Technician would be proper for a professional police officer who required little supervision and who was dedicated to the profession.

Once the officer attains the Public Safety Technician position, he has opportunity for higher salary and more responsibility. PST is the highest position available outside management; however, PST may be used as a supervisor when needed.

As stated before, other titles were considered - two being Police Agent and Special Agent. After discussion all discarded Special Agent because in our particular part of the

country we are overrun with Special Deputy Constables, Special Deputy Sheriffs, Special Police Officers and others. Knowing the public's sentiment concerning many of these people, we did not use that title.

In the management area of the department, we again borrowed from the business world. We believed that an officer responsible for a division of the department was, in truth, managing the division. Consequently, we named the position Division Manager and his assistant, Assistant Division Manager. These particular two positions replace the Captain and Lieutenant ranks. The Division Managers are also staff officers to the Director.

As of July 1, 1969, this method of organization has been in operation for eighteen months. We have been enabled to retain those people who are better trained and more experienced under this new method. We think the valuable thing in the Public Safety Technician position is that there does not have to be a vacancy occur in a higher position before the man is advanced in salary and responsibility. Within our allotted manpower, we may have, by the authority of the City Council, any number of Probationary Employees, Public Safety Officers or Public Safety Technicians without regard to the number of personnel in each position or in each pay grade within each position. In theory, every officer outside of management could hold the position of Public Safety Technician. Consequently, the Probationary Employee knows that he is going to move up to Public Safety Officer if he meets all of the criteria, and a Public Safety Officer knows that he

will move up to or advance to the position of Public Safety Technician after he has met with that criteria. He also knows that he does not have to wait for someone to retire or die, to get demoted or for the department to increase in size to advance in pay. As soon as he has accumulated sufficient training, experience and semester hours of college training, and has satisfactory service to the department, he is assured of advancement.

We have devised a point system of measurement to advance the men within grade to increase their income. We know that college training is very important, so we are giving thirty points for thirty semester hours of college. We also know that police training is important, so we have related police training to semester hours of college, and have given one point for twenty classroom hours of police training. We believe this balances out because one college semester hour is approximately twenty classroom hours. So the person going up knows in advance how he can accumulate points. If the man is ambitious and wants to get ahead, he is going to get the semester hours. He also knows for each twenty classroom hours of police training, he can get one point, which means he will be available to take police training. The classroom training is conducted by our own Police Academy. We believe, except for the basic training, a police officer should obtain the training on a voluntary basis rather than making it compulsory. Consequently, all advanced training is voluntary. If a man gets left by the wayside because he has not had the training, that is his decision to make. Advanced training is available to him.

In this new system, by giving one point for each semester hour of college work, we are able to point out to the person who has college semester hours or who is a college graduate, where he will be at any given period in his police career. We can show him what is necessary for him to do, besides just go to work and wait for his time to come around. We can hire an individual directly from the outside with college hours and give him increased compensation to start - the same increased compensation that they would get if they had been in the police department for a period of years. This does not mean that they immediately become Public Safety Technicians, nor does it mean that they will not have to serve a probationary period. They start as Probationary Employees, advance to Public Safety Officers, and from there they advance to Public Safety Technicians. During this time we are paying them to take police training and gain police experience, because we believe they are, and will be, in the long run, the most desirable employee. The complications that we are faced with today are training in advanced technology, and the various court decisions that have made our work more difficult. We recognize the fact that the more intelligent the individual is as a police officer, the better he is able to do his job and the better he is able to serve his community.

The question has been asked within our department, as well as by the community, "what happens to the individual who are already in the department and what happens to those who are not in a position to compete with the new people coming into the department that have two or three years of college or a college degree?". Our entrance standards are very high and

we have very few people who are in the department now that did not meet these standards on entering. These are people who have been in the police department for a period of fifteen years or more. We have been able to find assignments for them compatible with their education and also, with their training. These are still valuable people to our department, and we have no intentions of phasing these men out because their experience cannot be replaced. We have other people who can do the paper work and make the proper decisions for them in line with and consistent with their experience and education. At the present time, there are only five people in the police department within this category, and they all have assignments befitting their education, training, and abilities.

We have, in Victoria, two minority groups. Approximately eight percent of our population are of the Negro ethnic group, and approximately twenty percent are of the Mexican-American ethnic group. The balance of the population is made up of many, many ethnic groups, such as the Near Eastern, Syrian, Lebanese, Jordanians, Greek, Italian, Bohemian, German, French, and Irish. You name it, we have it. Most of these people no longer belong to the particular ethnic group, but we do have some very small ethnic groups within the community. Because of this and especially with the larger ethnic groups (the Negro and Mexican-American), it is necessary for us to attract into the department people from these groups.

It is very difficult to find people from these groups who can meet the age requirements and the high standards of entrance, stand up to the rigid background investigation and pass both the entrance examination and physical examination. As a result, we have established still another position within the department that would be open to persons who would meet all of our standards, except possibly that of education, age or perhaps, physical qualifications. Also in this group would be certain key female employees of the department who are unable to function as a full time or fully competent Public Safety Technician. The position has been designated Police Agent. There are five steps in the Police Agent's salary; the fifth step of the salary scale being immediately below that of a Probationary Employee.

The Police Agents would work primarily in civilian clothes and within their ethnic group. Most of the duties of female Police Agents would be confined to duties within the station house, such as interviews of females, matron duties, typing, clerical work, radio dispatching, assistants in identification section, etc.

We do not anticipate that all of our female employees will become Police Agents. They must be given the same training as that of other police officers in the classroom, and defensive tactics, firearms training, etc., and be able to pass all examinations satisfactorily, and be available for outside work when necessary. We have already given nine of our female employees basic training. Four have advanced to Police Agents.

We have employed numerous people from the minority groups in regular police functions. We have seventeen female

employees in the department of which four are colored. It is not too difficult to get colored clerical personnel, and they are doing an outstanding job. It is much more difficult to acquire Negro males who are interested in the police profession.

It seems to be more difficult to attract the Mexican-American. The mores of the people are such that when a Mexican-American becomes a member of the police department, he is immediately ostracized by his peer group. We do have a number of them in the police department, however. We have more people within our department who speak Spanish than we have members of this ethnic group. It is a problem that we have in this particular locale.

Now, eighteen months after the reorganization, we are surveying and evaluating to determine just exactly how we stand. We have found that the public as a whole, especially the men who are engaged in business, are all for the new system. They like it very much. They understand we are in a business, and our business is people. We are better able to relate to them, and they are better able to understand our problems.

Within the department, all men, except those who were brought into the department years ago, have accepted the new organization and are very enthusiastic about it. These men cannot see themselves advancing in pay or responsibility because of their lack of education. However, this is not true in all instances, because some of these people are making an outstanding effort to train themselves and to increase their academic education. The other people who are not accepting it are in positions where their abilities are not overtaxed, and they will get routine departmental raises in pay plus longevity pay. We have no active opposition to the organization within the department, because all personnel

who have been in the organization for a period of ten years or longer are receiving more than twice as much salary now as they made at the time they started. They see this and also see they are better accepted in the community. They are not looked down upon and are, in truth, respected as good up-standing, contributing members of the community.

The Victoria Police Department is not covered by Police Civil Service. We operate by a Merit System. New employees are brought into the Police Department after completion of a very complicated and thorough application and after having received an acceptable score on an entrance examination which is unassembled. This permits us to give the examination to one person or to a number of persons as they come in. The applicant is also submitted to a very rigorous and thorough background investigation, and a physical examination. After entering the police department, increased compensation and increased responsibility is measured by the person's ability to accept responsibility, by his self-improvement, and by his interest in his job, his ambition, etc.

The department is operated on a very liberal basis as opposed to a rigid "I give the orders and you take them" type of thing. All changes of policy are thoroughly discussed in staff meetings and alternatives considered. The department is not operated by majority vote, but the Director of Police is given advantage of the combined ideas of his staff and then makes his decision based on the ideas and thoughts brought out in the staff meetings. There is no way for the Director of Police to transfer his responsibility to staff, so consequently, he must make the final decision after having been properly informed

and after having received the ideas of staff. I cannot say that all procedure and policy decisions are in complete agreement with all staff members at a given time. However, the matter is fully discussed, and it is seldom that a disagreement or problem cannot be reduced to a workable plan. In this manner the Director makes the decisions.

After working with this plan for eighteen months, we are of the opinion that it is a workable structure and that we wish to continue with this plan with necessary modifications as they are needed.

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