

# LAW and ORDER

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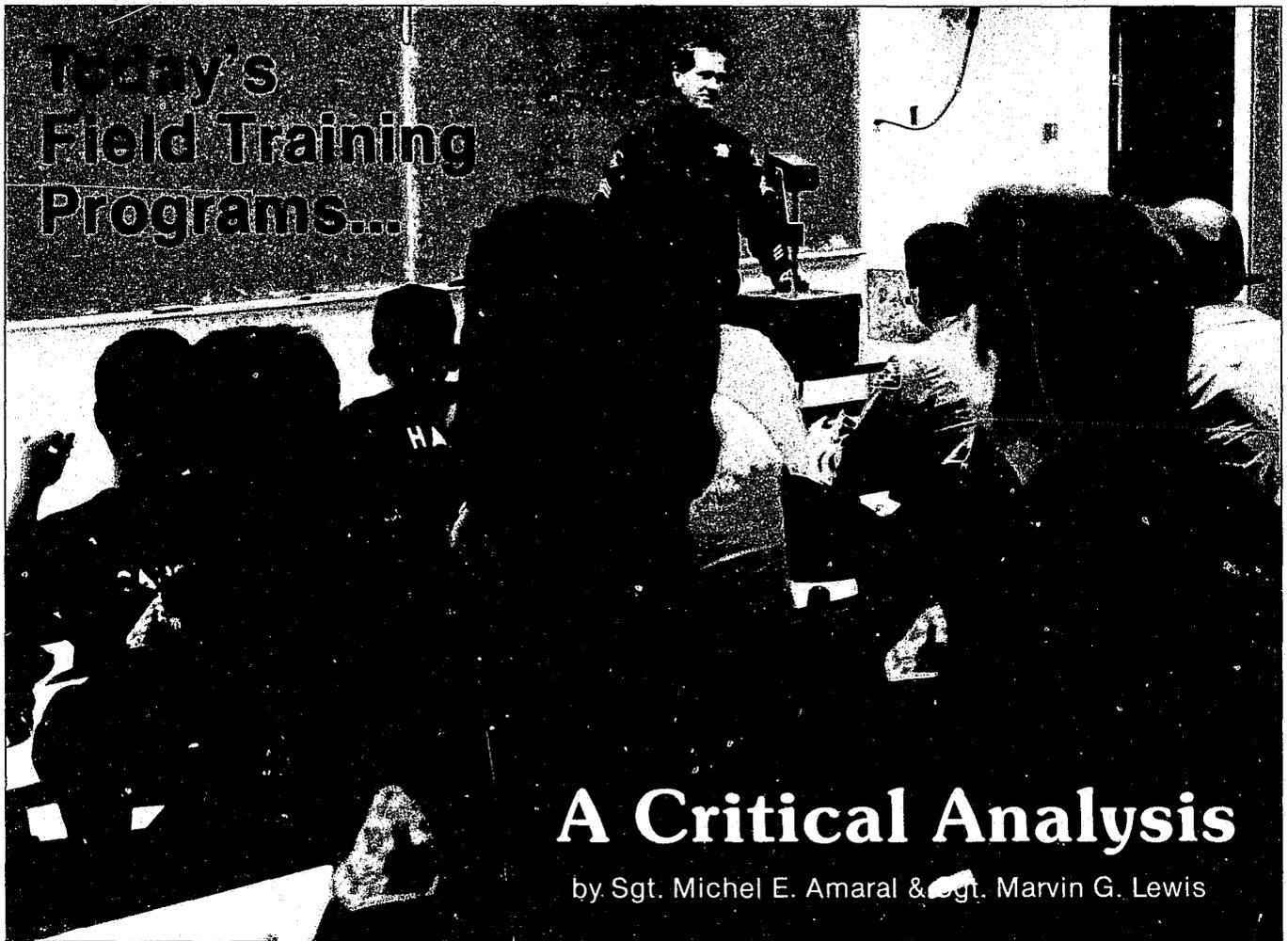
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## A Critical Analysis

by Sgt. Michel E. Amaral & Sgt. Marvin G. Lewis

It is well-established that the members of any efficient field training program must not only be well-trained initially but must also receive continuing in-service training.

Yet in today's field training arena, this is most probably the exception rather than the rule.

Updated instruction should be provided for all trainers at least annually in order to keep them current and highly motivated. A false belief and an acceptance exists among many that "once a trainer, always a trainer." However, many FTO's are not familiar with modern learning theories and are not up-to-date on advances in the field of education/training.

Today's training managers and Field Training Officers need to ask themselves some direct questions, such as: What is a learning goal? What is a performance objective and how does it differ from a goal?

If you are among the 5% that knows the difference—then answer these questions; how do you measure an objective? What is the role/responsibility of the

FTO? Is a field training officer supposed to be a trainer or an evaluator? Is recruit performance evaluated on style or technique? Are evaluations being recorded with low scores because the FTO believes that the recruit is not meeting his personal expectations? Are standardized guidelines being used properly, or at all? Do the numerical scores of the Daily Observation Report compare with (or are they inconsistent with) the documentation of narrative written to support the Daily Observation Report?

### Lack of Awareness

These are just some of the many questions that should be raised with trainers and training managers, new and old. It is surprising to learn that there is a general lack of awareness when it comes to actually knowing what the basic mechanics of an FTO program are.

Why is it essential to know these basics? Because, without the basics of understanding the principles of learning there is no consistency, development of progressive training and evaluation taking place.

Research shows that 80% of most newly learned information is lost within the first 24 hours of instruction. This means that unless we provide updated information, reinforcement or additional training in the learning process, we have not built a strong foundation to continue a FTO's personal growth. It also means that we cannot be effective and influential when exercising our duties and responsibilities as Field Training Officers.

When we look at most field training officer seminars, which are usually designed and developed for new trainers, we find that there is a relatively small portion of time allocated toward the teaching and evaluation process. The irony of all of this is that training and evaluation is the nuts and bolts of the entire program and yet it is often not recognized as such. If you don't have a good grasp on these two valuable ingredients, you cannot have a truly successful training program.

How can it be possible, or even reasonable to believe that a new trainer can learn the mechanics of training in

only four to eight hours of instruction? Indeed, it takes approximately four to six years of college before a person is qualified to teach at an academic institution.

How can we expect a police officer with minimal instruction in teaching, gained from a brief seminar, to teach and evaluate a new recruit officer? We simply can't.

A further consideration is, we have to remember we are living in the 1980's and coming into the 1990's. We are dealing with a new caliber of recruit officer. Many of these new officers have received advanced formal education and know the ins and outs of learning. Therefore, we must prepare and equip modern-day FTOs with the tools and resources to be able to provide basic and meaningful instruction.

More and more recruit officers that fail in FTO programs and are asked to resign from an agency are hiring attorneys to challenge their termination. Some of these attorneys are former police officers; they understand the system and how it works.

What is going to happen to a FTO that has trained and evaluated an unsuccessful recruit when it comes time to go to court to uphold the termination? What are his responses going to be when an attorney asks questions regarding the basic concepts of the FTO program as it relates to adult learning?

Several police departments have been asked to explain and defend their train-



ing function in Federal Court. Few were able to offer a satisfactory response. The courts found many inconsistencies and a general lack of documentation. The end result was that the terminated recruit officers got their jobs back, as well as lost wages from the time of termination.

That was in the 70s. What is happening in the 80s, and will happen in the 90s? Punitive damages and monies are being awarded to the plaintiffs (the terminated recruit officers). We are hearing such legal phrases as negligent retention, failure to train, failure to supervise, vicarious liability, etc.

This is not an attempt to paint a bleak picture of the future of field training

programs, but today's training manager must be aware of these issues. They had better have a basic working knowledge and understanding of the job as police field training officer.

We don't send police recruits onto the streets before they have been to a basic police academy. The same should hold true for officers assigned a training function.

Every department needs to look at their program to see if it is valid, reliable and effective. To accomplish this the "teachers" need to be provided with the necessary background and support. The only way a field training program can be strong is through the support of the head of the agency, the Chief or Sheriff,

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down through the ranks resting on the qualified Field Training Officer.

Today's police training officers should make a professional commitment to themselves and the organization to which they belong. The organization should support and make available to them training classes that afford them the development and knowledge of the basic essentials of a trainer, observer, and evaluator.

This commitment should include structured training courses that cover not only the theory of learning, but also its practical application. More and more agencies are sending their FTOs to training courses that certify a structured instructional curriculum.

A pertinent question is whether this is really necessary. Most well-informed administrators feel that it is essential. If we want to be considered professional we have to be not only committed, but progressive.

In surveying any well-trained profession you will see that some type of in-service training is mandatory. A medical doctor who graduated in the 70s and who has not remained updated cannot and should not be allowed to practice

medicine.

The same in-service training should be required of police officers who are assuming the responsibility of teaching new officers the skills and information necessary to perform the duties of police work. Are we fulfilling this basic function?

If you were able to answer affirmatively the questions we posed, and can truthfully state, "yes, we are providing yearly updated and progressive training," then you have built a solid training foundation.

On the other hand, if you could not answer "yes" to the questions, you should take a serious and critical look at your training program. You should start to prioritize a conscientious needs assessment.

It is never too late to start. Once you start to validate your training the pieces will all fall into place. If you don't, it's just a matter of time until your program is challenged. L&O

Sgts Amaral and Lewis, members of the San Jose, CA, Police Department, are experienced educators and trainers.

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