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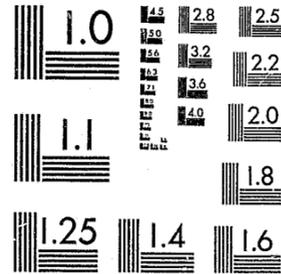
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MANAGEMENT STRATEGIES FOR PROBATION

IN AN ERA OF LIMITS

by

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CONTENTS

ISSUES IN BRIEF

Probation managers faced with fiscal cutbacks look for strategies that can help them to expand resources or to allocate them for better effect. They look for ways of meeting demands for increased accountability. They seek to mobilize community support. Personnel management takes on a whole new aspect; new ways must be found to reward and motivate staff.

There are two major sources of ideas and experience that can help the fiscally strapped probation chief: the academic world of generic public management and the practical world of the probation field.

This monograph attempts to draw workable ideas from both. The focus throughout is on practical utility for conditions of fiscal scarcity. For any given strategy there may be other good reasons for adopting the approach, but those reasons generally are well documented elsewhere. (Sections at the end of each chapter, entitled For More Information, suggest a few places to look).

In this volume we are concerned primarily with these types of questions:

> Does the current fiscal climate call for greater experimentation and innovation, or should managers be structuring, formalizing, and tightening down? (Both. Different kinds of response are appropriate in different situations.)

> So many probation agencies are giving up offender treatment and looking more and more like police departments. Must we go this route to survive? (Not if there is any room for probation managers to exercise real leadership and internal and external sources of support for alternate roles.)

> What about classification systems? Do they cut costs or not? (Not unless policy-level decisions are made to use them that way.)

> Volunteers: are they more trouble than they're worth? (Depends on how you use them, and what you hope to gain.)

> Should we get a computer? (Maybe. But take a look at needs and capacities first.)

> Are contracts with private agencies really the way to go? (Like everything else, they have their costs, but there may be unexpected benefits in sharing the job.)

> Are there other problems that might come up as these "solutions" are put in place? (Very often, yes --but the more that is known about field experience with various management strategies, the better these can be anticipated and dealt with in advance.)

Chapter I sets the tone of the monograph in an introductory way.

Chapter II lists facts to watch out for in choosing or in implementing strategies. Context makes a difference; but we don't always know exactly how.

Chapter III sets out a few concepts about leadership that should have practical meaning for managers in an era of limits. The essence of this chapter can be roughly summarized as follows:

> Quality issues (the concern of leadership) and efficiency issues (the concern of technical management) each have their place. Either one shuts out the other only at great cost to the organization.

Chapter IV begins the "strategy" chapters. This one looks at two critical internal agency resources: staff and information.

Chapter V examines field experience with classification, workload measures, lower-cost alternatives to supervision, and changes in the PSI.

Chapter VI discusses volunteers, user fees, private sector contracts, service brokerage, and other ways of expanding resources.

Chapter VII deals with linkages to functionally related organizations (those probation works with), to "enabling" entities (those that allocate funds and authority), and to supportive community groups (constituencies, as they have come to be called).

Chapter VIII examines the process of organizational and administrative innovation, noting some roles that outside technical assistance can play in promoting constructive change.

I. AN OVERVIEW OF MAJOR THEMES

There is a new mood evident throughout the land, and it manifests itself increasingly in restrictions placed on public spending and growing expectations for accountability in government. Vocal portions of the public no longer support unregulated growth in the public sector. Even those who call for maintenance of existing service levels seem less willing to pay the escalating price. We now must learn to make do with less, or find new and more resource-conscious ways of providing the services we have come to expect from government.

At the same time we must avoid a preoccupation with efficiency at the expense of other social and institutional values on which our public programs, and government itself, are based. It serves no one well to perform more proficiently a function that has lost its connection to the social fabric. Government is weakened when its agencies lose sight of the reasons for their existence, even more so than when they are simply inefficient, bureaucratic, or "fat."

Public agencies today are struggling to find just the right mix of efficiency in operations and centrality in the public mind. As the economic pie becomes effectively smaller, there is some sifting out of functions and services, with less valued (or less politically secure) activities feeling the pinch sooner or with more devastating results. Being able to demonstrate operational efficiency or cost-effectiveness helps; but those agencies that somehow project an image of <u>essentialness</u> are in an enviable position when budget cuts become the order of the day.

The Case of Probation

Probation departments are maximally affected by the squeeze on public revenues for several reasons. They often are loosely linked to the political and executive powers-that-be in state or local government. Traditionally they have had no informed and active public constituency. Their goals are vague, and their accomplishments difficult to measure. In some cases they are overextended, having expanded into areas of unfilled need when resources were plentiful. As public revenues begin to shrink (or at least stop growing at the same rate), these weaknesses are magnified by the shift in public opinion toward harsher penalties for convicted offenders. In this setting probation agencies have difficulty both in establishing a clear need for the func-

tions they perform and in proving that they perform them well.

There is great diversity in responses of contemporary probation managers to assaults on their funding base. Some are cutting back to basics, with "basic" defined by statutory mandate or by management's understanding of what probation does best. Others are seeking opportunities to expand into new areas, taking on functions for which there happens to be funding or which match local preferences for particular programs. Because of their inclinations and expertise, some managers concentrate on building public constituencies and political support, while others streamline and document internal operations to upgrade performance and accountability.

One finds no consensus in the field regarding the "correct" response to the challenges probation now faces. There is much talk about the need for an understandable mission, but little agreement as to what that mission should be. From various quarters one also hears that one approach or another to the probation task ought to be applied more widely. Differential caseload management, CRMT, contracting with private service providers, user fees --the probation manager seeking ideas is inundated with old and new organizational, administrative, and programmatic strategies for getting the job done.

First-hand observation of successful administrators makes it clear that <u>there is no one best way</u> of organizing and managing a probation agency, even in affluent times. Different situations seem to call for their own combinations of operating technology, organizational structure, agency mission, and management style. As resources are cut back, and "slack" in the system disappears, generalized prescriptions are even harder to come by. Successes and failures are accentuated, and in a less-forgiving environment it becomes crucial that actions be tailored to local needs.

The diversity found in the field thus seems entirely appropriate to the times, especially since rapid change and uncertainty have become the norm. Under the circumstances, a program of systematic experimentation, and avoidance of buying into permanent solutions, is exactly what is needed.

Combined with such an adaptive stance, agency managers today do well if they succeed in instilling a strong and broadly communicated organizational "character" based on values important to staff and to external constituencies. The successful probation agency stands for something. In addition to flexibility, it has integrity and coherence.

A Metaphor for Management

The considerable skill it takes to combine flexibility with faithfulness to core values is perhaps best described by Gregory Bateson, who has compared the predicament of political or administrative leadership to that of an acrobat on a high wire:

"To maintain the ongoing truth of his basic premise ('I am on the wire'), he must be free to move from one position to another. . . the position of his arms and the rate of movement of his arms must have great flexibility, which he uses to maintain the stability of other more fundamental and general characteristics. If his arms are fixed or paralyzed, he must fall." *

The problem confronting public managers today lies in discerning what are the enduring, non-negotiable values (Bateson's "fundamental and general characteristics") and what are the variables that can be traded off. Knowing where and when to take a stand, and when to accommodate, innovate, or adapt, enables leadership to walk a fine line with some confidence.

The specifics, of course, will differ from place to place. Different systems will be characterized by different values. The agency organized around offender rehabilitation and brokerage of community services will not much resemble the surveillance-oriented department that gains local respect for its contribution to law enforcement. Managers in two such systems will base their decisions on quite different facts, but they will have similar kinds of decisions to make. One assumption on which this monograph is based is that probation managers can learn much from each other about management under reduced resources, and that a summary of experience with various management strategies will be helpful to the field.

Our Purposes Here

This monograph is dedicated to helping probation managers evaluate some of the strategies developed by their own field, with special attention to their usefulness in an era of fiscal limits. The text draws heavily from the experiential information and observations contributed by a select group of probation and parole administrators throughout the United States, as well as

* Gregory Bateson, Steps to an Ecology of Mind, San Francisco, Chandler, 1972.

on-site observation of about one-third of all county probation departments in California. The two-year project underlying the report sought to place what was learned from the community corrections field in the context of generic public administration research and theory.

II. THE IMPORTANCE OF CONTEXT

A district supervisor in the New Hampshire probation system flatly rejected the idea that he might deal with his resource problems by either redesigning his organization or building support for it in the environment. "We have no control over our budget," he said. "We don't even buy our own supplies. Everything comes from central office, even the rules we have to live by." While this agency manager was responsible for providing probation services to his district, and for somehow absorbing the budget cuts that had come from above, the only variable he felt he could control in any significant way was caseload size.

It makes no sense to talk of "management strategies for probation" as if different approaches were equally appropriate for all of the varied situations in which probation managers find themselves. There are numerous organizational and environmental factors that determine the options available to a manager and affect the success or failure of any strategy he may adopt.

In the literature on criminal justice and corrections one often reads that "increased coordination" will reduce duplication and cut costs, that "alternatives to incarceration" are cheaper and just as effective, or that functional specialization of staff enhances the productivity of the unit and the agency as a whole. Yet it is clear to any experienced manager that such general statements are not always true.

If managers are to choose wisely among realistic options for an era of limits, they need to be able to estimate the likely effects of a given approach in their particular situation. The need for information on factors that limit transferability of management strategies actually is much greater when resources are scarce. Under conditions of growth and ready availability of funds, an error in implementation often can be corrected (or its effects obscured) by an increase in spending or a new program. Under fiscal limits, it becomes more important to do it right the first time, as implementation errors may result in opportunities lost.

Facts to Consider

There is a great deal still to be learned about the conditions under which particular resource-related strategies succeed or fail. Any of the strategies discussed in this monograph is more workable in some settings than in others. Success often is dependent on the way a strategy is applied (e.g., involving staff in decisions that affect them may smooth implementation of some kinds of change). But there are certain unalterable facts in any situation that affect success and may place a strategy completely out of reach.

In the pages that follow, these facts or conditions are mentioned whenever they are known. However, the general lack of information in this area means that managers must be on the alert for facts in their own situation that may restrict or negate the usefulness of any given strategy. A few of the more obvious facts that can be expected to affect the choice of strategies or their effectiveness are:

1. Management authority to innovate.

As was true for the district supervisor mentioned above, a manager may simply lack the authority to make certain kinds of change. Organizational placement (as with a sub-unit of a larger agency) is only one source of restrictions on the authority to innovate. A manager may be limited by agreements with employee organizations (which have been known to forbid such activities as time studies for the measurement of employee productivity), or by a lack of statutory authority (e.g., user fees may not be provided for). Statutory mandates in programmatic areas (e.g., for presentence investigations in all felony cases, or for a certain percentage of the budget to be spent on training) are common constraints on change. And the rules and conventions of civil service limit management's ability to reshape the organization even in times of real fiscal crisis.

2. Organizational characteristics.

A manager's options in dealing with resource constraints will be affected by such facts as the size of the agency (e.g., functional specialization may be impractical for the small organization) and the degree of centralization in the area in which change is being considered (strategies dependent on a high degree of coordination and cooperation may fail where operations are decentralized). The mission of the organization, its "fit" with norms and goals of other agencies and groups, and the diversity in programming it supports all will affect the selection of appropriate responses to fiscal limitations. (On the latter point, greater diversity may allow cuts to be spread among many programs and their impact on any one to be diluted.)

The stage of development of the organization also will be important. A relatively new or "young" probation agency, with fewer vested interests within or outside the organization, will offer different opportunities for change and adaptation than will the

organization with a long history of growth and development. An older organization may be more stable and secure, but it may have less freedom to change directions because of commitments made in earlier times.

3. Characteristics of the environment.

Certain physical characteristics of the setting in which probation operates will limit transferability of organizational and management strategies. Population density and the size of the geographical area in which services must be provided affect both the nature of probation task and the degree to which certain types of costs (e.g., travel) can be reduced. Such basic facts as the number of contacts an officer can make in a single morning are quite different in urban and in rural settings, and this may affect plans for changing the way caseloads are handled.

4. Political and administrative realities.

The environment also brings to bear such intangible but nonetheless important facts as prevailing attitudes toward probation (in the state legislature, in the county administrator's office, among local business groups) or toward probation's allies. The degree to which changes in the probation organization will impact other agencies also may be important, especially if those other organizations have the power to thwart the change or the ability and inclination to retaliate in other areas. The astute manager will take into account the politics of the situation whenever change is contemplated.

5. Economic realities.

The most obvious factor here is the source and nature of resource constraints. Is the budget crunch the result of a temporary downturn in the local economy or a more lasting reversal of growth trends in the public sector generally? Is there a commitment on the part of policy-makers to supplement the probation budget as soon as funding becomes available, or is there a general feeling that the department was overextended anyway? Some strategies are appropriate for short-term crises, but are likely to cause problems over the longer run (postponement of capital expenditures on needed repairs or freezes on hiring of personnel are two examples here.)

Other socioeconomic facts will influence the choice of strategies and their effectiveness in dealing with fiscal constraints. Demographic characteristics of the client population (how many are poor, unemployed, lacking in education) will affect the choice of programs to save and to cut. The employment picture locally will help to determine whether referral to job placement or training

programs can serve as a cost-effective alternative to other treatment or supervision programs. Strategies effective where unemployment is a healthy 2% may not be feasible in an area suffering a recession in its major industry.

6. Timing of resource decline.

Some resource conservation strategies will be of no use to the manager faced with a sudden and severe reduction in resources. At least in the short run, setting up a volunteer program or rationalizing the offender classification system will not pay off in time to help the manager whose funds are abruptly and severely cut. Such situations will require rather drastic adjustments in agency programs and personnel. Once adjustment at a lower level has been made, and the immediate crisis is over or under control, management can go about introducing the kinds of change that will make the organization more cost-effective in the long run.

There are other factors that will affect the choice of appropriate management strategies and their implementation in a particular setting. For probation agencies some of the most important will arise from the way in which this government function is organized and administered. The director of a state-administered probation and parole division will face constraints and opportunities quite different from those confronting a chief probation officer in a county-administered agency. Two county-administered departments, one under the judiciary and the other under the executive, also will impose quite different requirements for strategic management. Juvenile and adult probation agencies will find different sources of support and feel the pressures of different mandates; even in the same jurisdiction they may not experience resource decline to the same extent or in the same way.

Why Worry About Context?

We need to learn much more about the conditions under which particular strategies are effective and how they must be modified for use in different situations. As it becomes less possible to solve problems or meet new needs by an influx of more money, the initiative is tossed from higher-level policy-makers to those with responsibilities at operating levels.* Those in a position to manipulate organizational and administrative structures and

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* Some claim the new era offers more autonomy and greater scope for statesmanship at lower levels. See: Lawrence M. Mead, "Institutional Analysis for State and Local Government," Public Administration Review, Jan/Feb, 1979.

processes now are charged with maintaining or upgrading service with smaller budgets. In attempting to do so it is important to use strategies _precisely suited to the organizational context,_ and to focus on implementation —anticipating and planning for resistances and snags that may develop as a strategy is put to work.

Because there has been no pressing need to worry about implementation errors in the past, there is not a great deal of information to aid probation managers as they tailor strategies to deal with resource constraints. This likely will change. If the field is sincere about its new interest in organizational and administrative issues, it will produce, in time, a body of knowledge about context and its effects on the implementation of policies designed for an era of limits.

Meanwhile, managers can avoid many problems, and may get better mileage out of even the most straightforward resource-conservation strategy, if they routinely undertake some form of _implementation analysis_ prior to putting the final touches on any design for change. At a minimum, implementation planners should ask:

- What are my agency's most important objectives in this area, and how will this particular strategy meet them?

- What is unique about my agency or its environment that could interfere with the smooth transfer of strategies used elsewhere?

- Do existing rewards and incentives encourage and support the new behaviors required by the change, or do they work against successful implementation?

- Who are the major "stakeholders" in the change area (who will be affected by change)? What is the (actual or likely) position of each regarding the proposed change? And how much power or influence does each have in the change area (at a policy-making level, or in the ability to sabotage operational success)?

- Does the plan for change meet the needs of important stakeholders (or provide means for

working around them), and does it take into account the unique characteristics of the organization and its environment?

FOR MORE INFORMATION

In this area, one of the best sources of information is other managers. Ask colleagues what happened when a particular strategy was introduced, what unexpected problems arose in implementation, what factors seemed to influence success or failure, and what they would do differently next time.

Factors affecting implementation are one focus of the comprehensive review of probation literature by Eric W. Carlson and Evalyn C. Parks. See Critical Issues in Adult Probation, Issues in Probation Management, (LEAA, September 1979).

Assessing who might resist change, why, and how much is recommended in an article by two professors at Harvard Business School. For a useful guide to different sources of resistance and ways of dealing with each, see: John P. Kotter and Leonard A. Schlesinger, "Choosing Strategies for Change," Harvard Business Review, March/April, 1979, pp. 106-113.

III. MANAGING THE TRANSITION TO FISCAL LIMITS

Most probation managers have had to deal with temporary resource scarcity at one time or another. Some never have had budgets large enough to do what they thought was a fully adequate job. What is new, then, about the "era of limits" is not simply a lack of resources. It is the demands on public organizations, and especially their leadership, to behave in new ways.

A common theme beginning to be heard in diverse organizational contexts combines threads of more limited government (and expanded private sector responsibilities) with increased efficiency in the performance of scaled-down public functions. Added to this generally is a requirement for greater accountability to taxpayers and responsiveness to the voting public. Not all jurisdictions are experiencing pressures to cut back these days, but in those that are, probation managers may find themselves overseeing the transition to a new kind of service.

When the shock of funding cuts first hits, any manager's immediate concerns will be for ways to resist or accommodate resource reductions —for what has come to be called "cutback management." To work within a suddenly smaller budget (or the same size budget in inflationary times) management, at least in the short run, generally must make some cuts.

Over the longer haul, through purposeful and self-conscious organization renewal, managers may lead the agency to a position of greater visibility, utility, effectiveness, and strength that will permit it to do more than just survive budget cuts. In managing the transition to a time of fiscal limits, agency leadership may find opportunities to recharge, revitalize, and redirect.

For Example

In Fresno County, California, the renewal effort did not start with Proposition 13, but the atmosphere of resource scarcity sharpened the focus and gave impetus to change. Leadership in that county probation department now has moved far beyond the requirements for increased efficiency to define new roles for probation in the justice system and in the operations of general county government. The mission of probation here is stated in terms of broad societal needs for protection and restoration, but its highly visible programs are targeted on specific, locally understood and supported problems. Departmental managers present themselves as members of the "county management team," active on

task forces dealing with county-wide issues and needs. Interagency management of various programs and aggressive efforts to involve and inform the public add to the image and reality of probation as one piece of a better integrated, more efficient, and more responsive system of local government.

In Contra Costa County, also in California, probation managers have gone on to refine and expand upon strategies adopted to deal with the immediate threat of Proposition 13. With the spur of fiscal limits as an incentive to change, management works tirelessly in building, defending, and then controlling the budget, setting an example for other departments in accountability for the use of public funds. The top manager makes it his business to know exactly what is going on in his agency, and to have the facts and figures at his fingertips at all times. In the process of creating this kind of accountability, the department gained a tighter, more comprehensible mission, a clear statement of priorities, and a reputation for responsible, competent management that gives it both a sense of where it is going and some new resources for getting there.

In both of these jurisdictions, and in others where transition is taking place, there is evidence of far-sighted leadership —one that looks beyond the immediate need for budget cuts and hiring freezes to envision a new and perhaps more important role for the agency in a changed environment. The fiscal crisis, in many cases, has been what finally forced lethargic systems and organizations to do something about declining morale and motivation, about inefficiencies and waste, about neglected or never-developed relationships with other agencies, with citizens groups, and with the makers of law and policy.

It is no accident, though, when a probation department or a governmental system turns adversity to advantage, using resource problems as a catalyst for change. The process must be guided, and visionary leadership is the key.

THE ROLE OF LEADERSHIP

Good technical management may be sufficient in times of organizational stability, but under conditions of uncertainty and change the need for statesmanlike leadership becomes acute. Perhaps the most striking feature of probation agencies that are weathering well in the new fiscal climate is the leadership role played by top management.

The need for leadership arises from the nature of the challenge now facing probation —as a field and as a public organization. For probation as a field, the shortage of public revenues did not create this challenge. Corrections, and especially its

community-based component, already was suffering a crisis of identity, brought on by years of drifting without direction and aggravated by charges that "nothing works."

The new fiscal climate has only made it more urgent that probation define its place in the scheme of things —that it demonstrate what it does that no one else can do and why its existence is essential. The probation agency no longer can afford to remain aloof from its environment, ignorant of its own capabilities and limitations, uncommitted to values and goals that define its organizational character.

Probation managers know this. There is a great deal of energy now being devoted to building leadership capacities at state and national levels and to defining or clarifying the probation mission. All of this creative turmoil undoubtedly will benefit the individual probation organization as well as the field, if only by contributing to its sense of distinctive identity.

But leadership is needed at the agency level as much as in the field, and it is needed not only to resolve the decades-old question of mission. Wherever the probation organization has been challenged to adapt to a changed environment, the skills of the technical management engineer probably will not be enough.

Strong, value-based leadership is needed not only in articulating mission, but in shaping an organization capable of achieving that mission, and in carving out a viable role for the agency in the environment. Through this kind of leadership the organization can be guided toward a resolution of the mission question that is both workable in its own environment and consistent with core values of the probation field.

Leadership: More Than Good Management

Philip Selznick wrote a book on leadership in the late 1950s that has at least as much meaning for agency managers now as then.* In this book he points out the difference between "routine" and "critical" situations and decisions, showing that leadership (as opposed to technical management) is needed only for the latter. Routine problems, the kind that surface daily in any organization, do not require the attention of leadership. If the organization is relatively well-adapted to its tasks and setting it

* Philip Selznick, Leadership in Administration, New York, Harper and Row, 1957.

will tend to run itself. It is when decisions must be made or actions taken that may affect the nature of the enterprise that leadership is most vital. Lacking leadership at these critical points, an organization may drift, or, in unguided steps that have long-run costs, move opportunistically for short-term gain.

The setting in which many probation managers operate today produces an almost continuous flow of critical situations and experiences. In times of high uncertainty and rapid change, even those kinds of decisions that normally would be routine take on a critical quality. Recruitment of staff (or their layoff) normally would be left to personnel directors. Yet leadership may step in when the agency is evolving or adapting to change, since the kinds of staff recruited or retained will have far-reaching consequences for the character and capabilities of the organization.

A central role of leadership thus is in keeping the organization true to values and norms it has developed over time —pushing it into new territory when internal strivings and external pressures make it "right" to do so, resisting such moves when they would do the organization harm.

The task is one of protecting the integrity of the organization's developing character as adaptations to fiscal limits are planned and implemented. The skills of the technical manager are relied on to search out more cost-effective operating modes; those of leadership, to intervene in critical areas to keep the whole enterprise on track.

The effort to build organization character, to identify the agency with some understandable values and goals —while at the same time redesigning operations to meet new needs and expectations— requires of probation managers an acute sense of direction and balance. Managers must know when to invite participation in decision-making, when to take full control. They must know how far to bend in accommodating public opinion or pressures from funding bodies. They must make strong commitments at appropriate times, but know when to go it alone. The high degree of uncertainty in the environment makes desirable both stability (achieved by affirming commitments and tightening down) and flexibility (which comes from independence and a looser approach). Top management must strike a workable balance between the two.

Unfortunately, there are no clear-cut management formulas to guide action in these critical decision areas. In a sense, each manager struggles toward a unique, individualized solution. There are, however, some practical guidelines, and some theoretical or conceptual frameworks, that may help to structure what otherwise may seem an impossibly complex task.

Building Character Around Core Values

An "institution," in Philip Selznick's view of the world, is an organization that meets symbolic as well as material needs of the community it serves. It is not just a neutral mechanism for getting a particular job done; in doing the job, it manifests important social values and orients its efforts to socially valuable goals. Over time, as an organization becomes institutionalized, it takes on a recognizable character.

The difference between an organization and an "institution" is clear from the comparison between probation and a social institution such as law enforcement or the courts. Although neither the courts nor the police are immune to public criticism, both have an intrinsic worth to society over and above the functions they perform. They stand for values widely accepted, even revered; and their territory, or sphere of responsibility, only rarely is challenged by others.

Probation recognizes the advantages of being associated with important social values. This can be seen in recent moves by some departments to align more closely with law enforcement or the courts or to emphasize currently popular services such as restitution, aid to victims, or community work. These shifts in focus may be useful and appropriate, or they may be opportunistic, unsuited to agency capacities or long-term environmental needs, and ultimately damaging to the probation enterprise. It is not the particular value that makes an institution —it is the congruence of agency values (its mission) with the social, political, and organizational setting and the legitimacy that develops as the agency gains recognition as an essential public service.

But What Values?

There is no evidence that any one mission is inherently more appropriate, workable, or effective for an era of limits than any of the other currently popular expressions of the probation function. Probation agencies in some settings do well when they present themselves as enforcers of the law, stress offender control in their program focus, and look to police and courts for their major alliances. Elsewhere probation thrives when it endorses an offender-rehabilitation emphasis, or tries to integrate the two thrusts in what might be called a "balanced service." A selection of responses from managers asked to describe a mission appropriate for an era of limits may suggest the range:

> "The current atmosphere in the country is not favorable to a social work approach in the handling of people who break the law.

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In my opinion, any probation agency would be foolish to do away with training staff in counseling techniques and all the other good things we have done in the past and will continue to do in the future. Our public posture, however, will not reflect that position (e.g., most of our press releases today deal with probation violation matters, the return of prisoners, and so on.)"

"We have a strong service orientation, historically and legally, as reflected in our many specialized treatment programs. Of course, the probation officer has the authority and mandate to hold the offender accountable for his behavior. But in our jursdiction, offender services are what bring out the most varied constituents, and this emphasis reflects, I believe, the best of the probation profession."

"The balanced service has won me over. I'm a therapist by training, but even before cutbacks there were never enough people within or outside the department to meet our needs in this area. An enforcement orientation troubles me, but it is the one aspect of probation the community understands."

"Both orientations —treatment and control— are appropriate and not mutually exclusive. However, both are very limited in today's climate of diminishing resources. A much more global view of the world is needed. . . The fundamental purpose of probation is to aid in reducing the incidence and impact of crime in the community."

Not only is there no evidence that one mission is "better" for an era of limits than another. It also is not certain that a clear, unambiguous, and specific mission is necessarily more desirable than one that is general, inclusive , and difficult to quantify.

Very specific goals and strong, but exclusive commitments (e.g., one urban county department's identity and relationships revolved solely around the court) may bring stability through connections to external sources of strength, but limit the capacity of the agency to adapt flexibly to change. One manager points out the dangers of restricting one's contacts and capabilities, especial-

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ly since public attitudes tend to move from one extreme to another over a few short years:

> "Strong linkages to law enforcement, for example, are fine as long as the public is scared out of their wits and the police continue to project a positive image. Like all things, however, we are probably in another cyclical series of events here, and ten years from now this might be the most unpopular posture for an agency to adopt."

This is the dilemma that all organizations face. On one side is the need to clearly define organizational character —to come out in favor of specific goals and values that attract and hold certain kinds of staff, rally particular constituencies, and give meaning and direction to agency operations (including the process of cutting back).

On the other side is the need to retain that degree of freedom necessary to make unilateral decisions based on professional ethics, or to take light, quick steps in a new direction when circumstances or capabilities change. The task of leadership is to move the organization as far as possible toward institutionality without locking out or unnecessarily complicating present or future options for change.

Becoming an Institution

There is nothing wrong, then, with a broad or general probation mission (despite those who downgrade probation for trying to be "all things to all people"), as long as it is a genuine reflection of what the agency is, does, and represents. What is important is that the values and goals implied by mission be infused throughout the organization (to use Selznick's words) —that mission be manifest in core activities and programs, in the attitudes and behaviors of staff, in relationships with outside organizations and groups, and in the impact of the organization on its environment. Mission should be more than an abstract statement of agency purpose; it should be a tangible expression of organizational character.

Organizational character, like human personality, is not built in a vacuum. Nor is it superimposed artificially in one neat package at a single point in time. It is a product of the people who have worked in the organizaton, the commitments they have made, the linkages they have built and nurtured over time. Leadership can nudge the organization toward new commitments, new goals, when it seems right to do so. But the agency's long-term vitality, especially when fiscal resources are short, will depend in

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large part on the internal and external energies that can be mustered in its support. In this context, legitimacy —or institutionality— becomes a resource in itself, helping to make other resources go further.

Where probation approaches the status of a social institution, its leadership has:

● Assessed the agency's distinctive competencies —what it does best, and what it does that no one else can do;

● Appraised the competition —for both its capabilities and its political support;

● Articulated a set of values and goals matched to agency capabilities and community needs and congruent with principles of the probation profession;

● Molded organizational structures, created a program mix, and adapted operating technologies to promote goal achievement;

● Understood and, where appropriate, accommodated the needs and concerns of significant organizations and groups in the environment;

● Cooperated with organizations, groups, and individuals whose goals and values are similar or complementary;

● Communicated —through the media, in public speaking, through educational materials, in every personal contact within and outside the agency— a consistent, clear, and credible message about the purposes the agency serves and the ways in which it serves them;

● Involved staff and critical outsiders in important decision areas, but shouldered ultimate responsibility for making those decisions that shape and define the organization.

A Contingent Approach to Uncertainty

Core values provide a coherent framework for institution building, but moving an organization in any direction is never an automatic process. One author has described the process in terms

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some agency managers will instantly recognize:

> "It is a continuous game of coping with uncertainty and contingencies, with human and technological shortcomings, and with competitive interests. Thus the leadership must be continuously learning and adjusting, not only correcting variances from an original design, but making major changes in tactics, in timing, in programming, in resource allocation, and even in redefining institutional goals. Continuous and active management is thus indispensable."

A tentative, experimental approach to organization management is especially needed when the environment is volatile --when goals are unclear, alliances uncertain, and the future unpredictable. Robert Biller, dean of USC's School of Public Administration, claims that stable (or "bedrock") situations require certain kinds of management strategies, while unstable (or "swampy") conditions call for quite different ones.

According to Biller, bureaucratic strategies (these tend to be fixed, programmed in advance, and highly structured) are suited to stable conditions. They are likely to produce the desired results in predictable and controllable situations and times. When dealing with uncertainty, however, bureaucratic strategies may only make things worse.

It is not that non-bureaucratic (or "contingent") strategies are better than bureaucratic ones. The different approaches are appropriate for different types of problems. In any organization at any given time there are likely to be areas in which goals are clear, major facts are known, and the future is predictable enough. In these areas the manager is wise to proceed in a bureaucratic fashion.

It is in new and unfamiliar areas, characterized by uncertainty, that structured, routinized approaches mysteriously fail. These areas become more numerous as an organization is led through change or when external events, such as fiscal cutbacks, suddenly destabilize the environment. Probation managers in a cutback situation often report that "everything is different now." Some speak of disincentives, of being penalized for behaving in ways they were taught were correct and rewarded for behaviors that conflict with models of leadership developed over time.

If managers can learn to distinguish areas in which contingent strategies are appropriate from those that call for more bureaucratic modes, they may be more successful --and more com-

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fortable-- in the leadership role. Biller lists characteristics of situations requiring contingent management modes (those requiring bureaucratic approaches are generally the inverse):

> A large number of external actors have a stake in the problem and its solution.

> The actors and the ground rules are constantly changing.

> The actors are highly interdependent.

> Agency goals in the problem area are unclear, their value is ambiguous, and congruence with goals of important outsiders is not high.

> The technology used by the agency to deal with the problem is variable, difficult to quantify, and guided by uncertain rules.

By these criteria many aspects of probation today call for contingent management strategies. In some of probation's task areas it is not at all clear what results are sought or how the job is actually done. Work styles are variable and differences undocumented. Probation's agenda in such areas may fit poorly with community values and goals, especially where public attitudes have undergone recent change.

As the fiscal climate worsens, the environment becomes more unpredictable (actors and ground rules change), more people come to have a stake in what probation does with its resources (competition increases), and related agencies and groups become more interdependent (with less slack, unilateral action is more difficult or even disallowed). Contingent management strategies are needed in more and more situations.

Contingent Management Modes

How should these situations be handled? Biller describes contingent approaches as incremental (as opposed to comprehensive); specific (not general in scope); short-range (in planning horizon as well as in time between problem recognition and response). Organizational structures created to deal with problems in contingent areas are temporary, modifiable, and designed around competent people (rather than forcing people into organizational roles). These flexible organizational structures are capable of responding quickly and at low cost to changes in the problem. They are easily terminated when new structures are needed.

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In other words, management strategies in areas of uncertainty should be tailored specifically to the situation. Responses should be conceived of in temporary and conditional terms. A new structure set up to handle a problem should be seen as a project or "task force" to be terminated or modified over time. To maximize learning and simplify change, the project should be protected from some of the usual organizational expectations. The focus, for example, should not be on consistency with more permanent parts of the organization. The focus should be on finding something that works. *

Putting It All Together

How does the skilled probation manager put it all together in the 1980s? How can he both build organizational character and retain enough flexibility to be responsive to change in "swampy" areas? How much should top management bend to the demands of external interest groups, or accommodate the concerns of middle managers and staff? Where can standardized technologies be simply "installed," and where must leadership rely on local ingenuity to tailor its own solutions?

The chief probation officer of a rural county-administered department seemed to have found a workable blend of value-based leadership, flexible experimentation, and bureaucratic management modes. He was fortunate to have come into a department that already had some credibility, built over the years around a public-order and justice image that fit the local situation. He was comfortable with the role this mission placed him in (although some of his staff were not), and he chose to refine and elaborate upon it at every opportunity.

This manager was methodical in his approach to programmatic issues. He was convinced of the essential correctness of the agency's program mix, and a survey of public attitudes showed substantial agreement with him. The bedrock quality of this issue area led him to tighten down rather than innovate, and to concentrate effort on streamlining and refining a fundamentally sound operation. An offender classification scheme was adapted from another jurisdiction, and the different categories of adult offender were handled in fairly standardized ways. Juveniles were assigned to various programs, within and outside the agency, based on officers' estimations of need formed within the framework of departmental guidelines.

Where this chief made use of contingent management modes was in

* Robert P. Biller, "Public Policy and Public Administration," Korea Observer, Autumn 1978.

experimenting with centralization and decentralization of managerial functions. He admitted to being uncertain how much and where to share responsibility, and felt that answers in this area would have to be tailored to the situation through trial and error. Budget preparation and control had been shifted recently to division managers, while personnel management functions had been brought under central control. In both instances the door to change still was open. Solutions were being molded in place, and the process of change was ongoing.

Managers in other jurisdictions combine flexibility with bureaucratic modes of operation around quite different values and in different ways. Some centralize and standardize nearly all major internal functions, concentrating flexibility at the organization's external boundaries. Here management experiments with interagency programming, with involvement of the public, or with contracting arrangements that allow easy adaptation to changing needs. Contingent management of these boundary-spanning areas, plus a standardized approach to functions that benefit from tight control, contributes both efficiency and flexibility in appropriate places and proportions.

Leadership in times of uncertainty and resource constraints thus seems to require that managers know the difference between situations that are "swampy" and those that are "bedrock," and handle them in different ways.

As Biller points out, it is dangerous to apply bureaucratic strategies in areas where you do not know what you are doing, but it is a great waste of resources to avoid them when you do.

And What of Efficiency?

Institution building requires a degree of consistency in decision-making and behavior that on occasion may pit issues of quality against efficiency concerns. Organizations develop character in much the same way as people do. Loyalty to basic principles sometimes has its costs, and these may be borne for the sake of "building character." The double-bind in times of fiscal crisis is that while political rewards in the short run favor cutting costs freely, long-term success may require that certain essential organizational components be left intact.

Efficiency itself, of course, is an important value in government these days. In some settings it has been a major thrust of management efforts to build organizational character. There the probation chief may pride himself on contributing to the efficiency of government generally, and build agency reputation around the responsible use of public funds.

Elsewhere managers bring forward values that may work against efficiency (justice for offenders, restoration of victims, promotion of community well-being), but make up for this fact by cutting costs in well controlled, routine functions less central to agency mission.

Ideally, concerns for efficiency can be integrated with concerns for quality, as sometimes occurs when a cost-effective alternative (e.g., contracting out for group homes) also seems the right thing to do.

Summing Up

Where probation managers have been successful in combining principled adherence to core values with flexible use of appropriate management modes, they:

- Rely on their sense of the correctness of any action for the particular situation. Recognize that no other setting will support exactly the same combination of responses, nor will different problems in the same setting respond equally well to the same approach.

- Resist the temptation to adopt prepackaged solutions where little is known about the problem or its boundaries. (Tailor problem-specific responses where uncertainty is high.)

- Install proven technologies supportive of agency goals where the problem and its boundaries are known and understood. (Take advantage of broadly applicable, efficiency-oriented approaches where uncertainty is low.)

- Lock in new procedures only in well understood and controlled situations where developments are slow and predictable. Where organizational learning is taking place, avoid institutionalizing any one solution.

- Where major parts of the organization and its environment are undergoing change, set long-term goals based on strong values, but move toward them in flexible, tentative steps.

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- Look for ways to cut costs, improve productivity, and increase accountability throughout agency operations, but maintain vigilance and a long perspective, evaluating every proposed change for its potential impact on the quality of service and the nature or "character" of the overall enterprise.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

The Selznick book on leadership cited in the text should be read by any manager concerned with value-based administration and seeking to "institutionalize" his organization.

Transition management is the theme of a publication from the health field that has relevance for any publicly funded human service. See: Russell C. Coile, Jr., Transition Management: A Guide for Agency Self-Preservation and Self-Renewal, San Francisco, Western Center for Health Planning, 1981.

A study of the management styles of city mayors offers many important insights on topics of significance to probation managers today (e.g., network building, accessing critical resources, use of staff to multiply managerial actions) See: John P. Kotter and Paul R. Lawrence, Mayors in Action, New York, John Wiley, 1974.

Leadership in a cutback environment is the subject of a recent symposium in Public Administration Review, (Nov/Dec 1980). On the special usefulness of an understandable mission when cutbacks are required, see: Robert O. Behn, "Leadership for Cutback Management: The Use of Corporate Strategy," pp. 613-20.

For a useful description of structural arrangements that increase flexibility and capacities for change. See: Robert P. Biller, "On Tolerating Policy and Organizational Termination," Policy Sciences, 7(1976), pp. 133-49.

The NIC-funded Probation Mission Project explored the implications of the "justice model" for probation mission and methods. Contact: Doug Thomson, Center for Research in Law and Justice, University of Illinois at Chicago Circle. The project has produced a number of important publications.

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IV. UPGRADING INFORMATION AND INVOLVING STAFF

People and information are two of the most valuable resources to the fiscally troubled probation agency. Committed staff are important in the best of times; their involvement and support can be critical when other resources are short. Information, a basic input to management decisions, also becomes more vital when fiscal cutbacks force hard choices to be made.

Ironically, the ability of management to control these two resources decreases rapidly as funding becomes more scarce. Information, desperately needed, may seem too costly to analyze or collect. Staff, whose energies and talents could help offset fiscal losses, may begin leaving for more secure jobs or spend unsettling amounts of time in unproductive conflict and resistance to change.

Management of information and management of personnel require very different skills and may be responsive to very different management styles. But leadership must do both with some success if the organization is to make it through the hard times and beyond. Only two of many possible topics are examined here — some ways of involving staff in the process of organization change; and the pros and cons of investing in an upgraded management information system.

INVOLVING STAFF IN THE TRANSITION

One of the most frustrating, difficult, and all too often unsuccessful areas of cutback or transition management is that of bringing staff "on board" the effort to deal with resource problems. The failure to involve agency personnel in the transition process remains a real weakness in many probation agencies.

Almost any strategy for responding to fiscal shortages can be undermined by the active or passive resistance of staff. In one jurisdiction or another, staff opposition has complicated (sometimes thwarted) the implementation of classification systems, volunteer programs, resource brokerage or CRMT. Pressures from staff have led some managers to abandon cost-effective innovations (e.g., team approaches to workload management, use of paraprofessionals for routine tasks). Elsewhere, time saved through redesign of jobs has resulted not in more service to clients, but in longer coffee breaks.

At one level, solutions to problems caused by staff resistance seem straightforward and obvious. They are basic tenets of modern personnel management and fundamentals of everyday human relationships. People are more comfortable in a changing environment when they have access to good information. They are more willing to go along with decisions or work toward goals when they have had some input in making or setting them. Most people perform better when they receive feedback on results and recognition for superior performance.

A central problem for transition managers is that fiscal shortages both make urgent the need for innovation and restrict or deny the usual rewards for change. Just as productivity becomes an issue, the customary compensations for achievement are lost. Management must be unusually creative in designing motivations and rewards, and sometimes must acknowledge that no adequate compensation exists.

Further complicating matters, fiscal cutbacks often require decisions that staff could not reasonably be expected to support. There are no magic formulas for "involving" staff in the process of cutting their own jobs or in restructuring tasks in ways that penalize them. Managers may have some difficult and unpopular decisions to make, and they cannot afford to back away from them.

Even the most skillful manager will face some staff opposition, especially during fiscal crisis. There may be individuals whose support simply cannot be won. Certain people, for whatever reasons, may refuse to modify old patterns or to cooperate in resolving problems that affect everyone. Ultimately, they may have to be worked around, or asked to consider a change of jobs.

There also are likely to be some points in every change effort at which staff resistance is especially high —when the idea first surfaces, when a plan exists but no changes have yet been made, when a pilot is suddenly implemented more broadly, when a few months of experience bring to light unexpected problems, or when it still seems possible that things could be returned to "normal."

Even where participation and communication are established traditions, there will be moments when at least some portions of the organization make their opposition felt. Staff commitment can never be taken for granted. Managers will need to routinely inform, involve, and reward staff over the long run, but they also will need to make special efforts to respond effectively to short-term crises.

Improving Communications

Some of the most disruptive agency experiences with fiscal cut-backs have been those in which staff have not been kept informed --where managers have met behind closed doors, doing nothing to slow the spread of rumor and speculation, and leaving staff to wonder and worry until the pink slips are handed out. The damage to morale and to working relationships throughout the department sometimes has been large and lasting.

It seems a serious error to assume that staff can be shut out or their concerns ignored at a time when their opposition can be so costly. Management, of course, will have unilateral decisions to make, and some information cannot be shared. Improving communications does not mean making decisions in a fish bowl or allowing management functions to be preempted by staff. It does mean regular and frequent exchange of information, with an emphasis on uncertainty reduction and dispelling rumor. It may mean using communication lines to promote what one manager calls an "appropriate optimism."

The director of court services in Dodge-Fillmore-Olmsted (Minnesota) does not shield his staff from bad news, but feels that it makes a difference how information is presented. Distinguishing clearly between problems that require action and those that must be lived with saves everyone a lot of time and useless anxiety. This manager tries to be sensitive to staff perceptions of how a problem or decision will affect them, while making it clear where administrative prerogatives lie.

The Fresno County (California) chief makes heavy use of the interoffice memo to keep staff informed of developments and plans. A special series, entitled Looking to the Future, keeps everyone up-to-date on budget issues, changes in departmental directions, county-wide concerns, and ways the department and its staff have been recognized for good work. These memos are used to share both good news and bad, to solicit input, and to guide staff to additional information.

Such communications also serve a morale-building function. Fresno County staff are strongly encouraged to identify with the department, to take its goals and accomplishments as their own. Esprit is openly sought. The ethos is "We are hard-working, action-oriented, deeply involved in the community. Professional pride is still OK."

Staff Input to Planning

In Contra Costa County, California, the chief makes a habit of circulating among staff at all levels to share information

directly and to listen to their ideas and suggestions. He finds this an effective way to calm fears, short-circuit rumor, and at the same time probe for potential implementation problems or sources of resistance to change. The goal is communication more than active involvement in decision-making, but these contacts do aid the planning process. Clerical workers, he points out, may offer important insights into operational problems that planners at management levels would overlook.

The line between effective communication and participation in decision-making is a fine one. The group problem-solving or "brainstorming" approach is a common strategy of managers seeking to communicate the reality of resource constraints while encouraging staff to take part in dealing with them. Staff in Dodge-Fillmore-Olmsted were involved in a group effort to list ways of improving services and then to rank them for their feasibility under existing fiscal and political conditions. The results included some workable ideas for change (classification was one that was implemented), as well as a feeling among staff that they could have some impact.

Soon after passage of Proposition 13, Contra Costa County managers and staff went through an elaborate priority-setting exercise, using several different techniques to compare each departmental program with every other one and to rank them on various criteria. The exercise was part of an "organization development" effort led by an outside consultant and involving a broadly construed management group (including line supervisors). The chief acknowledges that the reshaping of organizational mission cannot be accomplished by a simple counting of votes. His approach was calculated to tap organizational energies and ideas and to turn them to the tasks of cutback and renewal. The exercises focused attention on the need to make choices as much as on the choices themselves, and served to share the burden of change as much as to initiate it.

Top management in Connecticut tries to involve in any planning group some people who are "still doing the line officer's job." Even in meetings of the management-level Mission Group, which plans policy and future directions for the entire agency, input or attendance of line staff is encouraged. Involvement of line staff in planning, says the director, is particularly helpful in "pointing out where a policy that looks good on paper might get into trouble upon implementation."

A Broader View of Management

Many probation departments, like other organizations today, are expanding the definition of management to include more individuals in a larger range of administrative tasks. Active reliance

on a management team is common among agencies that are coping well with resource problems. One chief put it succinctly: "The era of paternalistic management is gone. In a no-growth period, you have to get people to take more responsibility."

Fresno has formally redistributed decision-making responsibilities, asking divisional directors and unit supervisors to play a larger role in budget preparation and control, program priority-setting, and the hiring, transferring, and in-grade promotion of staff. "Our approach," says the chief, "has been to push authority and responsibility downward." Middle managers and staff also are expected to get involved in community service, serving on county committees and task forces, interagency commissions, and planning groups. In taking on roles usually played by top management, staff are encouraged to "buy in." At the same time, the effectiveness of the organization and its impact on its environment are magnified by the multiple efforts of management and staff.

Shared decision-making is especially noticeable where zero-base or program budgeting techniques are used. The requirement that budgets be built around programs "from the bottom up" has resulted in an effective broadening of the management team, as well as a deeper involvement of middle-managers in planning, evaluation, and cost control. The focus on program goals and alternate ways of meeting them pushes planning and priority-setting to lower levels and involves more people in the effort to keep expenditures down.

Making Use of Local Talent

Opening up to staff contributions can make a real difference in times of fiscal crisis. Not only does active involvement in problem-solving tend to lower resistance to change, but diverse energies and skills within the organization can be drawn on in designing solutions.

In some agencies staff members have developed major technologies for responding to fiscal cutbacks. Connecticut's risk prediction and classification instrument was constructed by a line officer. In Morris County, New Jersey, a probation officer "with little chance of personal gain" developed a program that relies on in-house staff expertise to make up for drastic cutbacks in external drug/alcohol assistance programs. In that same jurisdiction, two senior officers worked with the state administrative office of the courts to design a computerized management information system that they then installed in their own county.

Managers who look to their staffs for technical expertise have reported a few raised eyebrows from other managers within and

outside the agency. But if the talent is there, it makes sense to use it. An in-house design is more likely to be suited to the agency, and, with resources short, outside assistance may be out of the question.

Motivations and Rewards

"Bright, competent people," says the Morris County chief, "will produce wonders if encouraged and recognized." This manager agonizes over his inability to properly reward the contributions of his staff, but makes certain that recognition for successful programs at least goes "to the people who do the work, not the administrator."

With promotions and raises scarce or nonexistent, many managers now rely heavily on what one calls the recognition factor, hoping that at some point they will be able to supplement this with more tangible rewards.

Recognition may take various forms —awards, publicity, personal communications from top management. Sometimes job titles may be changed to reflect actual achievement, even if promotions are not currently available. Merit bonuses, administrative time-off, increased freedom in setting work schedules (flex time, four-day work weeks, etc.) are some other ways of acknowledging the exceptional contributions of hard-working individuals.

Training, where funds for it are available, is a popular reward and motivator. Where such programs can be preserved or even expanded, they are perceived by staff as a benefit and they promote feelings of professionalism, pride, and departmental unity. Before training programs are cut, the impact on staff morale certainly should be estimated.

A participative and responsive organizational climate itself can be an important motivator and reward for achievement and hard work. Where suggestions, questions, and criticisms are welcomed, and where people have some say in the design of their jobs and the quality of the work environment, there seems to be greater job satisfaction, higher morale, and less wasted time —at least among more responsible and dedicated employees.

Paving the Way for Change

Too often a plan that looks good on the drawing board runs into problems because the people who must implement it have not been considered in the design. Staff opposition is a natural response when jobs are made more difficult by a poorly conceived procedural change imposed from above. Even if the plan is a good one, those affected may resent not being consulted and do as little as

possible to aid its implementation.

The effort to gain staff support can be taken too far. In many agencies the majority of employees simply do not want change. But change sometimes does have to be made, and managers may have to push it on through. "Support is great," says one probation chief, "but not absolutely necessary. We went to great lengths to win staff support for our new classification system, including ad hoc committees, open gripe sessions, and training seminars. Finally we had to proceed in the face of considerable discontent." (Most staff eventually came around. "Time is a great healer.")

Generally, however, staff resistance can be minimized if they are involved in the planning and consulted on the design. When considering a volunteer program, for example, ask staff what they want from a volunteer resource. How might volunteers make their jobs easier? What kinds of volunteers would be most useful? Who should provide their training, and how should they be supervised? Giving staff a say in how volunteers will be used creates a feeling of ownership of the program and a vested interest in its success.

Starting small and branching out also seems to help. Connecticut's classification project made use of a supervisory committee that included a cross-section of agency staff. This committee developed the entire project, which then was "spoon-fed to the rest of the staff in small doses." By the time of agency-wide implementation, no one was totally unfamiliar with the instrument or the project.

One team of officers also piloted the Connecticut system, showing others that it need not cause any tremendous problems. That this unit was led by one of the department's most competent probation officers gave its members an elite status that made the project attractive to others. Staff in the experimental unit used all the forms and were instrumental in getting changes made. They continued to meet once the system was in use throughout the agency to analyze feedback from other officers and to further refine the instrument.

Presenting the change as a learning process, in which feedback from the operational level will be used to improve the design, also helps both to lower staff resistance and to make the plan more workable. Handing down a new procedure or program with the message that "this is how it will be done" often insures that it will never be fully implemented.

At the same time, top management should make it clear that changes will be made. "Staff should not be allowed to imagine,"

warns one manager, "that foot-dragging will force things to return to the way they were. They must understand that change is necessary, even though they will have many opportunities to affect its form and content."

In Sum

"In too many instances," observes the manager of a small New Hampshire probation office, "clients are treated better by officers than staff are by management. Clients at least are asked to take part in setting goals because we know this works better than telling them what to do. The same is true of professionals, but to many managers this message has not gotten through."

Strategies designed to involve staff are likely to be more successful where they have been the norm all along. A cooperative effort to deal with resource problems requires a strong foundation of mutual respect and trust between staff and management, and this cannot be created full-blown on the day that budget cuts are handed down.

A forceful initiative to improve past relationships can, of course, be begun at any time. And some tangible evidence of renewed commitment to communication and participation may be an effective way to launch the transition to an era of limits. A few suggestions from managers in the field are:

- Don't worry about personal credit; spread the credit around.

- Encourage people to identify with the goals you have set.

- Try to convince staff to avoid "turfiness." Stress cohesiveness. The message should be: We're all in it together.

- Be absolutely open and honest with staff. If an agenda item is labeled "action" it must be negotiable; if it is already decided, call it an "information" item.

- Give strong direction on goals and philosophy. Then demonstrate your own commitment through action, not just words.

- Avoid a "doomsday" atmosphere. Your attitude will affect others.

- Give continuous feedback on what is taking place —both good and bad, but don't share rumor and speculation. Make sure communications are solidly based on fact.

- Respond quickly to bright ideas. Reinforce innovative behavior by being responsive to it, even if it means saying that the idea can't be implemented right now.

- Any move toward "participative management" must be real. Rules and limits must be clear, and relationships honest. Don't raise expectations that cannot be fulfilled.

UPGRADING MANAGEMENT INFORMATION

All complex organizations have some kind of management information system. When probation managers talk about installing a management information system (or MIS) they usually are referring to some effort to improve or expand existing systems for collecting and processing information. The systems they are considering generally are more sophisticated, more elaborate, better integrated. Often they are aided to some extent by computer.

The rationale for devoting scarce probation funds to a new or upgraded MIS generally has to do with the need to demonstrate accountability for departmental performance, especially at budget time. During times of fiscal cutback, probation managers often feel they need better information than they have had available in the past. The questions asked by those who make funding decisions are more numerous and more pointed. Citizens groups, boards, and commissions also begin to take greater interest in exactly how the tax dollar is spent. Department heads must have all the right information, not only at budget hearings, but at any time they are asked to explain some aspect of agency operations.

Probation managers are formalizing classification systems and developing workload measures for much the same reasons. (Classification schemes themselves are information systems, and they are a major component of the newer MIS models designed specifically for probation.) All of these developments are designed to increase management control over resource use and generate information to answer many kinds of questions about what the agency does and how well it does it.

There is no denying that information is valuable, especially in an era of limits. Information is needed for planning, evalua-

tion, and performance monitoring in addition to budget analysis, control, and justification. It is particularly useful for making and defending resource allocation decisions (e.g., without good outcome data it may be hard to gain acceptance of "banked" or non-reporting caseloads).

The question is not whether more information is a good thing to have. It is how much and what kinds of additional information should be collected, and at what cost?

What Are the Options?

Management information systems can be developed at widely varying levels of detail and for widely varying costs. Coming up with a satisfactory system will require managers to take a close look at agency needs and at various ways of meeting them, then to consider the trade-offs between cost and quality at every point in the emerging plan. Few probation departments really need (or can afford) all the "bells and whistles" of a fully integrated, tailor-made, agency-wide, on-line computerized MIS. Fortunately, there are other ways to go.

In Contra Costa County, California, the probation chief does an impressive job of data analysis with no help from a computer and only an informal system of classification and case management. Monthly statistics collected at the program level are fed to top management quarterly, where they are worked into a host of charts and graphs depicting inputs and outputs, unit costs and resource needs. Using a hand calculator, this manager turns some rather simple statistics into convincing demonstrations of probation's contribution to the community and the justice system. Systematic classification (which the department is now moving toward) might provide more detailed data, and a computer might speed its processing, but this manager's effectiveness in areas that depend on good information shows just how much can be done with a very small investment.

Wisconsin has an elaborate and highly integrated classification and case management system that includes an MIS component. The entire system took four years and almost a million dollars to develop, but its generation of management information has been extremely cost-efficient. This large state system (around 30,000 cases) has been able to provide managers with a wide range of aggregate data for planning, monitoring, budgeting, evaluation, and public education purposes for a surprisingly small sum (not including costs of data entry, the total for data processing reportedly has been as low as $2,400 a year). The MIS requires little software of its own ("canned" statistical programs are used), and a "batched" system of entering keypunched data into the state computer keeps processing costs way down.

Morris County, New Jersey, contributed the skills of two proba-
tion officers to the task of creating a statewide model probation
MIS, which they then implemented in their own county. Like the
Wisconsin system, New Jersey's APMIS treats classification, case
management, and management information as an integrated package
(all three were developed and implemented together). But the use
of computers in Morris County is flexible, based on needs and
budget. The function of collections (child support, restitution,
fines) is "on line" with a terminal connected by telephone to the
university computer; other functions, including many kinds of
management reports, are done in "batch mode," which the chief
finds perfectly adequate considering the low costs.

Clackamus County, Oregon, has opted for a fully integrated,
agency-wide, largely on-line system that serves officers' opera-
tional needs as well as management control and planning func-
tions. Designed by a private consulting outfit, this system
covers local community corrections (probation and parole), as
well as the jail, and eventually will serve two counties. The
consultant recommended a time-sharing arrangement, but the county
decided to tie the system into its own data processing facility.
The new system is just now being implemented, so experience with
it is limited. But as one of a new breed of corrections-
specific MIS, this is a system that many will want to watch.

The National Institute of Corrections is sponsoring the develop-
ment and testing of a model MIS, designed around the Wisconsin
system with Travis County, Texas, as the pilot site. PROSYS can
be operated manually by small agencies, but it is intended pri-
marily for use as an automated system in which the probation
agency has fairly direct access to the data entry operation. The
system is similar to that developed for Clackamus County in that
it produces both aggregate and individual case reports (poten-
tially useful to line officers as well as managers) and at least
some of its functions (e.g., financial) are on-line rather than
batched. Although PROSYS has been developed on a "mainframe"
computer, there are plans for reworking the system to run on a
"mini" computer, and possibly even on a "micro."

Recent developments in the field of data processing have made
available general-purpose programs for use on small-business
computers that may make these affordable "micros" a viable option
for some probation departments. It is already possible to run on
a microcomputer programs with capabilities similar to those Wis-
consin gains from its general-purpose programs on a large main-
frame. Also available are off-the-shelf "data base management"
programs that can be used for manipulation and retrieval of
individual (case) records. Because of the sizeable cost savings
associated with the use of general-purpose programs, and the in-

creased flexibility such systems permit (costly reprogramming to
reflect changed agency operations or needs is avoided), probation
departments not already tied into existing systems may want to
investigate these further.

Assessing Needs for Information

The first step in planning for expansion of the agency's informa-
tion system is to consider what functions it will be expected to
serve. For example:

1. Is the primary need for better data at the operational level
to aid both management and line decisions? Do line officers and
supervisors have the information they need for case planning and
assessment? Are there ways of relating characteristics of offen-
ders or their handling (number of contacts, kinds of services,
referrals, etc.) to outcome in order to improve case decisions or
program planning?

> If this kind of information is not now col-
> lected in any consistent fashion, an invest-
> ment in systematic classification and case
> management may be worthwhile (Chapter V).
> As the basis for the agency's MIS, this sys-
> tem can be automated or not (with various
> possibilities in between).

> The classification/case management system
> and the MIS may require the collection of
> different kinds of information or use infor-
> mation in different ways. For example, in
> order to conserve resources, some jurisdic-
> tions may choose to ignore offender needs in
> classifying for assignment to supervision
> level (see Chapter V). However, they may
> want to collect that same information for
> use in program planning, policy analysis,
> evaluation, or research. It may be impor-
> tant to know that most of the agency's
> clients have (for example) employment prob-
> lems, even if high need in this area does
> not automatically place an offender under
> intensive supervision.

2. Is the major need for improved analytic capabilities to serve
top management in planning and policy-making or in maintaining
accountability for performance?

> Improvements here likely will involve some
> help from a computer. However, there may be

no need to own or share in equipment or to
do much original programming or system de-
velopment. Immediate access to requested
information --or "real time" response--
generally is not important for these pur-
poses. Management decisions of this type can
wait for less costly batched processing of
aggregate data by a large government-owned
or university computer, and data analysis
can be done using existing general-purpose
programs designed for the social sciences.
Large agencies must rely on computers to
perform many types of management analyses,
but batched runs on an as-needed basis can
be very reasonable in cost.

As already noted, general-purpose programs
of the kind needed for (aggregate) manage-
ment analysis also run on the small micro-
computers.

3. Would operations be significantly improved if one or more
functions were automated? Is there a need for improved informa-
tion processing at operating levels as well as at management
levels? Would certain functions (e.g., collections and disburse-
ments) be especially aided by on-line (even real-time) capabili-
ties?

Any MIS has a better chance of acceptance by
staff --and thus may result in better qual-
ity data-- if it serves line-level needs for
case-related information in a timely manner.
Costs of such a system, however, may be
higher than one that serves only management
needs for analysis of aggregate data (es-
pecially if programming or systems develop-
ment is necessary). Costs also may be
higher due to line officer needs for on-the-
spot data entry and, if not real-time, at
least quick-turnaround response. Depending
on how these needs are handled (e.g., will
terminals in the probation office be on-line
to a high-priority time-sharing operation?
or could a small computer be located in-
house too?), costs can vary widely. Yet,
lacking reasonably quick response capacity,
any system is likely to meet with some staff
resistance. Reports that are slow to arrive
at the operating level probably will be

viewed by staff as a management tool, even
if attempts are made to sell them as an aid
to officers.

Avoiding Unnecessary Expenditures

Management information systems used by probation vary widely in
the functions they perform and in the resources required to
develop and to use them. Underlying the variety in more super-
ficial areas are basic differences on two dimensions (both of
which are reflected in differences in cost):

(1)Is the system an administrative manage-
ment information system, used for management
control, planning, and accountability pur-
poses, or is it a case management informa-
tion system, used for operational and logis-
tical purposes at the line level? (It may
be both.)

(2)How and to what extent are computers
used? How much system development is in-
volved, and what arrangements have been made
for use of computer time?

It may not have to be expensive to meet information needs. The
following are a few ways to keep costs down:

• Don't tie yourself into any equipment first.
Make sure you are clear about your needs and
understand the various ways of meeting them
before you consider laying out funds for a
"system" or the equipment to run it.

• Don't rely for advice solely on someone who
is selling a particular system. Talk to
disinterested outsiders too. (Morris County
convinced a couple of systems experts from a
large corporation to volunteer a few hours
consulting time to help them evaluate their
needs).

• Don't assume you have to be able to do
everything available technology allows. Of-
ten it is the decision to do things of
marginal value that makes a system costly.

• Make sure, however, that the system will do
what you need it to do. If important opera-
tions are ignored, the system may not be

used to full advantage or properly main-
tained.

- Analyze your operations critically. Don't
just automate existing paper processes. Ask
why you are doing things that way in the
first place.

- Involve those who will use the system in the
planning process. The questions they ask
will be pertinent to implementation.

- Use in-house talent to the maximum extent.
This not only can save on development costs;
it also may increase acceptance and under-
standing of the system.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

The relationship between
quality of worklife and
productivity (and ways of
enhancing both) is the fo-
cus of a book by Edward M.
Glaser (Productivity Gains
through Worklife Improve-
ment). Dr. Glaser can be
reached at the Human In-
teraction Research Insti-
tute in Los Angeles.

The U.S. Bureau of Justice
Statistics has published a
useful overview of correc-
tional information systems
designed to answer a wide
range of inquiries about
agency operations. One
chapter reviews report
generating software availa-
ble for use on main-
frame computers. See: U.S.
Department of Justice, Cor-
rectional Data Analysis
Systems, by Charles M.
Friel and others, Wash.,
D.C., 1980.

A number of software com-
panies are offering off-
the-shelf programs for "mi-
cros" similar to those once
available only for main-
frame computers. For exam-
ple, ACCESS/80 is the
trademark for a customized
report generator with capa-
bilities similar to SPSS (a
general-purpose statistical
program used on the large
mainframes). A relational
data base management sys-
tem, trademarked dBASEII,
is designed for use by non-
programmers and handles up
to 65,000 records. Watch
for more in months to come.

Information about PROSYS or
about the MIS used in Wis-
consin is available from
the National Institute of
Corrections. (Contact:
Chris Baird.)

V. ALLOCATING SCARCE RESOURCES

Probation managers coping with fiscal cutbacks or handling larger
caseloads with no increase in budget look for strategies that can
help them to better allocate available resources. Changes in two
areas currently are receiving primary attention: refining and
formalizing the process of classification/differential offender
management (often using workload formulas to rationalize case and
officer assignment); and streamlining the presentence investiga-
tion process. Each of these can aid in the allocation of re-
sources with minimal waste and with maximum attention to priority
tasks.

Alternatives to supervision (restitution or community service as
well as simple "banking" of cases and conditional discharge) can
be used in combination with formal or informal classification to
conserve resources for those who need or can benefit from more
intensive supervision.

FORMALIZING THE CLASSIFICATION PROCESS

Classification and differential handling of cases have long been
the norm for probation agencies dealing with varied caseloads.
Distinguishing among different types of offenders, and then
treating them in appropriately different ways, is a logical way
to meet offender needs and minimize risk to the community. Where
caseloads are large, differential treatment becomes essential if
available resources are to be focused on those who need it most.

In recent years there has been a trend toward systematizing and
formalizing the classification process. Many probation depart-
ments have developed their own classification instruments or
adapted instruments developed elsewhere. Many also are refining
and standardizing their case management modes to match available
resources to client groups (e.g., specialized units) or to pro-
mote more consistent and measurable handling of cases (specifying
the components of different levels of supervision).

The rationale for systematizing procedures used informally for
many years generally involves some combination of the growing
concern for equity in the handling of offenders (given impetus by
the concept of "just desserts") and the need for more objective,
explicit, and replicable bases for making resource allocation
decisions. The need for detailed information for purposes of
accountability and budget defense is a recent, but increasingly

prominent, reason for moving to more formal classification and case management schemes.

Classification and Resource Conservation

But can formal classification serve as a major resource conservation device? Should probation managers look to these systems to help them cut costs? It depends. An important fact to remember about classification instruments and case management schemes is that they are at heart neutral management tools. They can be tailored to the needs and policy concerns of almost any jurisdiction. They can expand the use of resources as easily as conserve them. Classification and differential case management will not reduce resource use unless probation managers and judges are intent on using them for this purpose.

Classification instruments themselves may contain biases toward increased resource use. For example, the well-known Wisconsin system (at least as originally designed) involves the collection of kinds and amounts of information that may place higher than normal demands on data collection resources. Still, it is more often the policy element of the classification process —the decision rules— rather than the instrument, that makes a system cost-conserving or not. In the Wisconsin system it is the decision to include the needs assessment score in classification for supervision level (which may place a low-risk client with high service needs on intensive supervision) that holds the potential for increased resource use.

In both cases the tendency toward increased costs can be reversed. In some places where modified versions of the Wisconsin system have been introduced, for example, information considered less important is simply not collected, while the needs assessment is used only for case management, not for assignment to supervision level.

The flexibility this implies is what makes formal classification and differential case management potentially so useful in resource conservation. Where a well designed and maintained system is in place, management has access to the information needed to move scarce resources around as policies, client characteristics, or resource levels change. By modifying the decision rules and raising or lowering cutoff points (e.g., to move more offenders to lower levels of supervision) management can use the classification system to respond quickly to a changing situation, maintaining ongoing balance between available resources and needs for them.

Some managers report that, without their classification system, they could not handle the growing workload with the resources

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provided by their budget. The sentiment expressed by Connecticut's director of adult probation is not uncommon:

> "There is no way that we could continue to be described as a service-providing agency or agency concerned with protecting the community if we did not have this [differential caseload management] system. We have had no new positions assigned to this agency by the legislature since 1977, and the caseload since that time has increased by 6,500 cases."

Connecticut's classification system, called Differential Caseload Management by Objectives (DCMBO) was developed by a talented staff member. This individual first surveyed the field for available models that might be suited to his agency's needs, then recommended that Connecticut design its own.

The DCMBO guides officers in assigning clients to one of three management modes. Clients in Model I are unsupervised for the most part, contacted by telephone and correspondence as needed. Model II clients are those who demonstrate no willingness to change their behavior; they are placed in a "surveillance" mode and are returned to court immediately when they violate probation conditions. Model III clients are relatively high risk, but ready to change and capable of being helped. Supervising officers generally carry caseloads of Model II or Model III probationers, seldom taking on both types. This enables officers to more clearly define their roles, and gives clients a better understanding of what is expected of them.

In Connecticut, formal classification and differential case management have made it possible to take on constantly growing workloads by sorting out those cases that can be "banked" into unsupervised categories. The substantial data base (developed on 48,000 cases under an NIC grant) provides information on client characteristics for use in designing supervision modes (e.g., contact rates for different caseloads) and in making supportable recommendations to the court. These data also are useful in assigning officers to different locations (office-by-office analyses of client types are constantly updated). As such, formal classification represents a vital resource allocation tool to this jurisdiction's probation managers.

Another Story

It is instructive to contrast the situation of a small probation agency serving a geographically dispersed rural clientele. In the Keene, New Hampshire, district probation office formal class—

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ification was used to equalize officer caseloads ("a morale factor, if nothing else") until budget cuts reduced professional staff to two. Since that time, the classification system has been overshadowed by the logistics of travel. But even when the office had more staff an offender's classification was seen as a general guide for decision-making ("not as gospel," the manager says). The chief of one of California's more rural probation agencies agrees with this approach: "No classification system that ignores geographic location would be cost-effective for us."

Informal classification will always be useful, when resources are scarce, to determine which cases can be banked, terminated early, or assigned to unsupervised activities such as restitution or community work. The move to formal classification, however, may be more useful to some probation agencies than others.

The utility of the DCMEO to the Connecticut system seems to derive in part from the size and structure of the agency (including the need to allocate resources among a number of offices) and the large numbers involved (up 6,500 cases in less than five years). To a small, single-office agency, formal classification may provide a rationale for differential handling of offenders (and protection against charges that offenders are inappropriately "unsupervised"), and it may aid the functional specialization of caseloads and officers —a boon to some managers looking for ways to reward and motivate staff. It may be less important to the small, rural agency as a resource allocation or conservation tool.

A Low-Cost Option

One type of classification instrument that may be extremely useful to the smaller agency (or to any agency that does not make use of specialized caseloads) is the intake screening tool. The probation division of the Hamilton County (Ohio) Municipal Court uses an instrument based on information commonly gathered at intake to divert 40% of the caseload to non-reporting probation status. This instrument, developed in-house by the intake supervisor, identifies probationers who have no significant life problems and little likelihood of being rearrested. Typically, these clients have some education, a stable marriage, few convictions, and no indication of serious substance abuse.

Hamilton County probation managers tested other screening instruments (including Base Expectancy), but felt they were not sufficiently accurate to warrant labeling cases as potential "failures." They found it easier and more productive to identify those most likely to succeed (this does not include all potential successes, which are simply the inverse of predictions of fail-

ure, but only those very low-risk cases that can be easily spotted). In this way they avoid what they feel may be the self-fulfilling prophecy of high-risk classifications, and their predictions of success are wrong only 2% of the time (compared to 50% when they tried to predict success or failure for the entire population).

Definite cost savings are claimed for the Ohio approach, which, according to the intake supervisor, has enabled caseloads to be reduced "to the point where they are just barely manageable, rather than intolerable." (In three years, caseloads had climbed from 150 to 300 as staff declined from 36 to 24 and the number of judges increased from 10 to 16). Implementing the screening program costs the agency little beyond the printing of forms, since volunteers handle the intake interview (using the instrument) and then set up the conditions and complete the paperwork for non-reporting status.

Minimizing Costs

The costs of introducing a classification system clearly do not have to be great, but they will vary with the complexity of the system and the purposes it is designed to serve. A screening tool intended only to spot low-risk cases for banking or diversion, as the Hamilton County example makes clear, can be developed and used with only a small investment. An instrument intended primarily to increase equity and standardize decision-making also can be reasonably inexpensive to design and maintain.

A risk prediction instrument need not be costly if it is adapted from another jurisdiction without extensive local validation. Some experts feel that such validation is not really worthwhile anyway. Accuracy in risk prediction, they argue, cannot be very high (Marvin Bohnstedt, of the American Justice Institute, claims that 20% of variance is about the best one can do), and most instruments, validated or not, are quite similar in the data items they rely on. Judging from the frequency with which non-validated instruments are being used, many managers apparently agree. Decisions about risk must be made. Structured instruments, even if they are not fine-tuned predictive tools, can add equity, accountability, and control over decisions about offenders and about the allocation of resources to deal with them.

Most systems will involve some of the usual costs of organizational change. There may be a drop in productivity while people learn new ways of doing their jobs or adjust to the changes in routines of others. When a system of any complexity is introduced, there will be costs for staff (or volunteer) training in new procedures and the use of new forms. Where opposition to

change is great, the costs will be higher. Ongoing training also will be needed as the system (e.g., decision rules) change. Staff should understand from the start that the classification system is not cast in stone, but is designed to change with changing needs.

Although implementation costs can be minimized by keeping the classification project simple, a more comprehensive approach may have long-run advantages for those agencies that can afford to go this route. A total caseload management system, including workload standards and defined case management modes and integrating classification and outcome data into the management information system (computerized or not), allows managers to use classification and related data for planning, budgeting, evaluation, and accountability purposes.

Periodic reclassification is another element with short-run costs and long-run potential for cost avoidance. Requiring reclassification at regular intervals, and encouraging movement of offenders to lower supervision levels whenever possible, can help to shorten average terms and conserve costly supervision resources.

Dealing with Staff Resistance

The most common source of implementation problems seems to be staff resistance. Probation officers (and their unions) may fear that the classification instrument will reduce the need for professional judgment in developing case plans, and that differential management will result in fewer probationers under supervision.

The first fear generally is unfounded. These instruments can be filled out by nonprofessional staff, but in most probation departments (especially those dealing with felons) the assumption is that professional judgment will always be needed to oversee, evaluate, and when necessary modify, the classification decision (about 15 to 20 percent of the cases coming to probation are said to fall outside the categories dealt with appropriately by any instrument). At any rate, it takes a strong policy initiative to alter the mix of professional staff and volunteers or paraprofessionals. No classification instrument is likely to serve as a sufficient incentive to this kind of change.

The second source of staff concern —that differential case management may result in needs for fewer staff— has somewhat more validity. What research is available does suggest that caseloads shift to lower supervision levels when instruments are used. Whether this leads to a reduction in staff or simply brings officer caseloads down to a reasonable size depends on local policy and resource conditions. Neither outcome is a

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necessary product of differential case management.

Most jurisdictions seem to overcome staff resistance to formal case management schemes by stressing that probation officers may override any level-of-supervision assignment suggested by the classification instrument. Officer overrides, in fact, are necessary if the system is to be responsive to actual caseload characteristics. To keep the system up-to-date and to maintain equity in the handling of offenders, management should monitor the percentage of overrides and the reasons for them (which officers should be required to give) and then revise the system, when appropriate, to take into account any patterns revealed.

Classification: How Does It Rate?

Field experience with classification schemes suggests that:

- Cost savings can be immediately forthcoming if classification is used to screen out a significant proportion of probationers from active supervision.

- Otherwise there may be no immediate cost savings associated with implementing a case classification system. In fact, there probably will be an immediate increase in costs to develop or adapt such a system to local needs and to train staff in its use.

- There may be other resource-related benefits, including long-run cost avoidance (if not actual reductions) through improved resource allocation, but this requires judicial and probation management willingness to use the system for this purpose. The tool and the policy go hand-in-hand.

- The increased equity, accountability, and control over resource use associated with systematic classification are themselves important values for public service agencies in an era of fiscal limits.

- When combined with workload measures (see next section), classification aids in resource allocation and equalization of workload among officers and offices.

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- Integrated into a management information system (Chapter IV), classification provides detailed information on offenders for evaluation purposes, as well as for projection and defense of resource needs.

SUBSTITUTING WORKLOAD FOR CASELOAD

The debate over ideal or appropriate caseload size has gone on for decades without coming any closer to consensus than a general feeling, at least within the field, that "caseloads are too high."

One reason for the failure to come to closure on this central resource-allocation issue undoubtedly is that caseloads differ. They differ because not all cases require or tend to receive the same amount of time and effort. Without a systematic means of equalizing the distribution of different kinds of cases among officers (and offices), a caseload of any given numerical size may be light or heavy, large or small, depending on the work involved.

Workload measures have been developed to improve upon the caseload as a means of assigning cases (and other responsibilities) to officers, as well as for allocating officers (and other resources) to offices, functions, or divisions of the agency. Because of the demonstrably greater equity that such a system permits, states that subsidize locally-administered community corrections operations also are moving to replace caseload with workload in their formulas for allocating funds.

Workload measures are an adjunct to formal classification, since consistent means of assigning clients to different supervision intensities (reflecting staff time and effort) are necessary to a determination of workload "size." Classification provides a basis for deciding where to invest resources; workload measures enable resources to be optimally and equitably applied.

The steps involved in developing or instituting a workload system are fairly straightforward. Time studies are used to obtain a measure of the amount of staff time that goes into the activities associated with various supervision levels, as well as that devoted to such tasks as investigative work and hearings. Other activities (program development, community work, administrative tasks, etc.) also must be assigned some unit values expressed in terms of time. Total agent time available (minus personal time, sick leave, and vacation) then is used to compute both the combinations of cases and activities that a single officer can reas-

onably carry and the number of agents an office with a given workload should be assigned.

Advantages of Workload Measures

In addition to increased equity and precision in resource allocation, the most commonly cited advantage of these workload measures seems to be the increased specificity they permit in supporting budget requests. Those responsible for budget appropriations reportedly are "tired of hearing the yearly plea for more officers" to handle what is claimed to be a constantly growing caseload. Use of workload figures provides a consistent measure of departmental workload relative to available staff, and this allows budget decisions to be based on some knowledge of their likely effects on operations. Connecticut reportedly has built in "a tremendous amount of accountability" in recent years:

> "We utilize a work unit system and attach a numerical work unit to every aspect of the probation job. We are now able to show the percentage of time spent in the field, in the office, in investigative work, court work, serving of warrants, etc. The day is gone when one can simply try to justify the budget request based on caseload sizes and the number of investigations completed during a given year."

The chief in Contra Costa County (California) uses a workload system to keep tabs on his various divisions' actual and "earned" (meaning what they "ought" to have if resources were sufficient) staffing levels. When resources do become available these figures help to settle the question of where they will be applied. They also are useful in depicting areas and extent of understaffing and the likely effects of any proposed cuts in the salary line.

Perhaps the most important contribution of the workload measure, at least from the taxpayer's point of view, is that it halts the practice of rewarding the accumulation of ever-larger caseloads. Managers throughout the public sector have long decried the lack of incentives for efficient management of government services. In probation, awarding funds on the basis of caseload counts has discouraged efforts to conserve resources by moving people off probation as rapidly as possible. Without this fundamental change in the reward system, other measures to conserve may have unacceptable costs. The director of a locally administered department in a Community Corrections Act state made this point:

"As long as the State hands out dollars for every case retained on probation, it hardly makes sense to look for ways of improving productivity. We may do so anyway, because we believe it's right; but if we do, the money we save will go to those counties that are least efficient. First we've got to replace caseload with workload in the State's allocation formula."

There are ways of avoiding increased productivity even where workload measures are used. The policies that drive the classification system (e.g., how many and which offenders are placed on maximum) and case management scheme (how much goes into each supervision category, how quickly cases are moved to lower levels) will determine, to a very large extent, how many officers are "needed." By assigning high time values to a function such as maximum supervision, and then routing a large proportion of offenders through it, any department can use workload measures to "prove" its need for more resources.

Like classification, then, workload measures are a neutral management tool. They too can aid in resource conservation, or they can serve the opposite purpose. They do, however:

- Provide a basis for equitable allocation of scarce resources among jurisdictions, among offices, and among functions;

- Make explicit the assumptions that underlie resource allocation decisions and budget requests, thus encouraging a more responsible and responsive budget allocation process;

- Provide managers with information needed to use available resources in a more purposeful manner, including the ability to either make optimal use of shrinking resources or demonstrate the department's need for more.

USING ALTERNATIVES TO REGULAR SUPERVISION

Increased use of less costly alternatives is the policy element that makes classification a resource-conservation tool. Unless low-cost alternatives are available, classification may have no cost-reducing or cost-avoidance effects. The information generated by systematic classification likely will be useful in other ways (e.g., increased accountability and control over resource

use, better data for budget defense). But for managers looking for ways to cut costs, alternatives to the normal probation routine are an indispensable concomitant of formal or informal classification.

Alternatives to regular or intensive supervision come in many different forms, their variety reflecting the conditional nature of the probationary sentence. In most jurisdictions, the judge can use considerable discretion when it comes to designing a sentence appropriate to the case. Within limits set by the court (and with the judge's tacit or express approval), the probation department then can apply any of a range of resources over a defined but alterable period of time in managing the case.

That alternatives to regular supervision can be found becomes most evident when departmental funds are sharply reduced. Although we might rather learn this fact in other, less unpleasant ways, even already high caseloads can be handled with fewer resources through greater reliance on court diversion, "banked" (no service) probation caseloads, conditional discharge, or early termination. These, in fact, may be among the few immediately available options for a resource-poor department faced with sudden and significant budget cuts.

Some Simple Low-Cost Alternatives

A small district probation office in New Hampshire, pared to a professional staff of two, makes heavy use of various formal and informal alternatives. Early termination is a major resource-conservation strategy. Cases are reviewed as often as once a month to determine who can be taken off probation and, wherever appropriate, petitions to do so are filed with the court. "It is rare," the district manager reports, "that anyone stays on probation for their entire term."

One mechanism for early termination is a contract developed with offenders that sets out what will be accomplished by specified points in time. The probationer is asked where he would like to be in six months or a year; then the officer helps him to "back-plan" to set monthly goals in a matrix of "key result areas" that will lead to the stated objective. As long as an individual is progressing toward his goal and staying out of trouble, little supervision or service is provided.

In this same district, a court-funded diversion program siphons off some cases before they reach the probation department (others are diverted informally at later points). Many of those who remain are given some form of conditional discharge or placed in no-service caseloads contingent upon paying a fine or victim restitution or doing some type of volunteer community work. All

The success of this kind of program may depend on <u>factors outside the control of the probation agency</u> —the availability of low-skill jobs, for example, or the acceptability to the business community of the kinds of clients the department generally handles (this does vary from place to place, even among those that deal with the same kinds of crimes). Much, however, can be accomplished by a skilled job developer, especially with aggressive marketing of the program by top management and support (or leadership) from the court.

The Quincy program does show impressive completion rates (about 80% of the restitution orders are paid, and about 90% of those sentenced to community work comply). And such success is not unique to that setting —a restitution program operating in ten cities in Ohio, Indiana, and Illinois (called Prisoner and Community Together) reports that 98% of its restitution orders are paid.

Minimizing Costs of Alternative Case Management

Some alternatives (e.g., banking of cases, early termination) may produce immediate and direct cost savings by cutting resource investments, not replacing them with others. Community service and restitution may or may not cut costs, depending on how they are used.

Even if used as alternatives rather than enhancements, restitution and community work may increase costs of service. (Some programs, for example, have ended up costing more than the jail incarceration they were designed to replace). Even at a low level of staffing and programming, there will be development costs and ongoing expenses associated with program management and job placement (or contracts with others to perform these functions). Directors of many programs spend a good deal of time looking for ways to fund them.

It is possible, of course, to use restitution and community work as alternatives or as enhancements without setting up a formal program if an agency wants to go this route. In the New Hampshire district office these dispositions are handled without fanfare. Restitution is the responsibility of the defendant rather than the probation department. Direct payment to victims means that probation generally does not have to go through setting up a case, monitoring collections, and so on. If verification of payment is presented within the time frame ordered by the court, the resources of the probation department may not be called upon at all.

In Sum

"Probation too often plays games with figures in order to protect our 'overworked' image," concludes one probation manager. "We have to realize that it is not how many cases we have that is important, it is how we handle them. A great many probationers do well <u>without our help.</u>"

Certainly if cutting costs is the goal (rather than proving a need for increased revenues), the use of lower cost alternatives to regular supervision is an obvious way to go.

- Combined with careful screening or classification, dispositions such as diversion, banking, conditional discharge, fines and restitution/community work can serve as cost-effective alternatives;

- In addition, any means of insuring that offenders "pay for" their crimes can enhance the public image of probation as an instrument of justice and a mediator between lawbreaker and society.

STREAMLINING THE PSI

Most efforts to alter and improve the presentence investigation process have been aimed at increasing the accuracy, utility, and consistency of information and recommendations contained in the PSI report. The goal of reform in this area generally has been more equitable and more appropriate decision-making about offenders.

Experience gained in a two-year demonstration program,[*] recently completed under an LEAA grant, adds a new motivation for change in the PSI process. In this nationwide action-research program, probation agencies in nine state and local jurisdictions experimented with PSI format, content, and processes. Increased efficiency in the PSI process was only one of the goals of these experiments, but the short-report format (which all projects developed) and some of the other innovations adopted in different sites did <u>reduce report preparation time and associated costs.</u>

[*]   American Justice Institute, <u>Presentence Investigation Report Program</u>, by Loren A. Beckley and others, Sacramento, Ca., 1981.

Some Specifics

In Pima County, Arizona, for example, the probation department cut preparaton time by 33% and costs (even with a 10% salary increase) by more than 21% through the use of short reports in appropriate cases, interfacing of forms to eliminate duplication, and use of lower-cost personnel and volunteers in data collection tasks. In Washington, D.C., purchase of word-processing equipment and restaffing the report production unit with upgraded positions produced a 50% reduction in draft-to-final report production time, even with fewer clerical staff. The unit now produces more reports, and the reduction in the salary line will offset the costs of new equipment in a year and a half.

The Washington, D.C., department also experimented with a team approach to investigation. Officers in a specialized PSI unit handled interviews and report-writing individually, but worked as a team in data collection and verification. One officer, for example, might be responsible for verifying employment status on all cases referred to the unit, while another performed all residence checks. A paraprofessional hired with grant funds assisted officers in data collection tasks (especially those requiring time-consuming trips out of the office). In this manner six probation officers and one paraprofessional assumed the workload of seven officers.

The range of activities undertaken by study sites suggests that streamlining the PSI process is a strategy available to any probation agency, regardless of size, resources, or authority to innovate. Use of short-form or "quick-turnaround" reports may require statutory, judicial, or administrative authorization, while purchase of word-processing equipment, even if highly cost-effective, will be beyond the capabilities of some departments. Any agency, however, can examine existing work flows and find some ways of reducing preparation time and costs. Changes of this kind made by LEAA study sites include:

> requiring dictation of reports;
>
> eliminating duplication in forms;
>
> reducing the number of steps for case assignment or report review;
>
> tailoring information requests to source agency and type of information needed;
>
> executing interagency memoranda of agreement to share information;

> arranging for pretrial agency to forward information collected at arraignment;
>
> leveling PSI workload by encouraging courts to coordinate scheduling;
>
> assigning volunteers to court to accept referrals;
>
> using student interns or paraprofessionals for routine data collection and verification tasks.

As a group these jurisdictions showed that cost savings can be achieved through the use of short reports, as well as through changes in data collection and report preparation processes. Using these savings to "rationalize" resource allocation, however, may prove more problematic.

In theory at least, savings in the PSI area can improve resource allocation in two ways. Agency resources no longer devoted to presentence investigations can be targeted on other functions (e.g., supervision), and, if more efficient report preparation results in speedier sentencing, the resources saved by reduced pretrial detention become available for use in other ways. The first adds resource flexibility to the probation agency; the second, to the justice system as a whole.

Impact on Other Functions

For various reasons, the impressive cost reductions achieved in some experiments did not have the effects on resource allocation that might be expected. In some jurisdictions the experiment, although a success, was discontinued. In others, the savings generated simply failed to spread to other areas, within or outside the agency.

Implementation problems of the first type occurred in at least two locations. The team experiment in Washington, D.C., was abandoned after six months, largely because of officer dissatisfaction with the approach. Probation officers disliked having to rely on the scheduling of others, and they preferred to control the work that goes into their final products. In Multnomah County, Oregon, a cost-effective change in report format did not get beyond the experimental phase because state approval of the new forms was not obtained. The project had received state go-ahead to experiment with report formats, but neglected to pursue the necessary authorization to make the change more permanent.

some ownership of problems that may arise, as well as of any products that come out of the group effort.

Changes should be designed and sold as an experiment, with ongoing assessment and modification as indicated. Nonetheless, everyone should understand that some change will occur, and that management is committed to improvement in this area. "Staff should not be allowed to interpret projects such as this as temporary," advised one manager, "or feel that they will probably go away after a short time. They must not be allowed to revert to the old way when anyone's back is turned."

All participants should be encouraged to communicate their reactions to new formats or procedures, and this feedback should be considered in making modifications. Formal evaluation, at whatever level is feasible, will be necessary in determining whether change has been successful. But "data" will not be a sufficient guide for action; people and their roles in the interorganizational setting will heavily influence success.

Summing Up

Field experience with efforts to streamline the presentence process suggests that:

- Costs associated with report preparation time can be reduced with little or no adverse effect on the quality of service to the courts (short reports, however, may not serve correctional or other needs as well, but these needs can be met in other ways).

- Reductions in preparation time and costs may or may not produce added resources for supervision, earlier sentencing, or reductions in jail populations. All of these will take special efforts and skilled management of implementation problems.

- Where probation takes a leadership role in drawing system members together in a joint effort to increase system-wide productivity, there are many opportunities for organizational "character-building." Streamlining the PSI is a good focal issue for initiating this process, while at the same time generating some real cost savings.

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FOR MORE INFORMATION

The National Institute of Corrections provides technical assistance and training to implement a management package, including classification (Wisconsin-based), a case management system, a management information system, and a workload deployment system. The package provides a comprehensive approach to resource management involving all levels of the organization. Contact: Chris Baird, National Institute of Corrections, Washington, D.C.

Technical assistance and training in the PSI area is offered by the American Justice Institute in Sacramento, Calif. Contact: Loren A. Beckley or Ben Coates.

The community service and restitution program of the district court in Quincy, Mass., is described in The Earn-It Story, by Andrew Klein, available from Citizens for Better Community Courts, Quincy, Mass.

For technical assistance in designing and implementing a classification system modeled after Hamilton County, Ohio, contact Larry Muse at the Municipal Court, Probation Division, in Cincinnati.

The American Justice Institute and the National Council on Crime and Delinquency completed a national survey of screening and classification instruments in use in 1979. Volume II of their survey report describes 23 different instruments used by probation and parole agencies to assign cases to level of supervision. American Justice Institute staff also provide technical assistance and training in the development and use of classification instruments. Contact: Marvin Bohnstedt, American Justice Institute, Sacramento, Calif. The survey report, entitled Probation/Parole Level of Supervision Sourcebook, also is available from the National Institute of Corrections.

The National Institute of Corrections funded a study of the use of community service orders as an alternative sentencing disposition. A primer on setting up and operating a community service program (including copies of forms used and locations of model programs) appears as: Community Service by Offenders, by M. Kay Harris, NIC, Washington, D.C., 1980.

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VI. EXPANDING RESOURCES

In addition to strategies that aid in resource allocation, probation managers are considering ways of expanding the pool of available resources. Three such approaches are discussed here: increased reliance on volunteers and paraprofessionals; user fees (especially the controversial but increasingly common fee for supervision); and various means of sharing the probation task with others (through brokering or contracting for services, as well as through some more novel forms of public-private partnership).

All of these strategies can add flexibility to probation systems squeezed by shrinking budgets. Through their use existing resources can be made to go further. With the possible exception of user fees, which are primarily a means of adding dollars to the budget, all of these strategies also build public constituencies that can help insure probation's long-term health.

USING MORE VOLUNTEERS AND PARAPROFESSIONALS

Volunteers and paraprofessionals are a well-established resource for the probation field. In some jurisdictions, they are a significant part of the service delivery system. Hundreds of volunteers work in some of the larger departments, sometimes performing any or all tasks otherwise assigned to paid personnel. Paraprofessionals, too, allow the agency to make better use of staff resources by taking on many jobs that do not require professional attention.

Increased use of volunteers and paraprofessionals would seem to be an obvious strategy for the fiscally troubled probation department. An LEAA-funded study by the Correctional Economics Center estimated that probation agencies could save an average of 5.8% of their total operating budget by making optimal use of paraprofessionals and volunteers.[*] The model used for cost analysis had paraprofessionals performing PSI data collection tasks and volunteers supervising minimum-risk probationers, in both cases replacing the services of paid professionals.

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[*]   National Institute of Law Enforcement and Criminal Justice, Cost Analysis of Correctional Standards (Vol. II), Wash., D.C., 1978, pp. 63-66.

In theory then, expanded use of volunteers and paraprofessionals can save scarce probation dollars, making it possible to do the same job with a smaller budget. Yet few agencies seem to be using this strategy to deal with fiscal cutbacks. Why?

First, the size of the probation workload is increasing in many jurisdictions, and lower-cost personnel simply make it possible to get by under conditions of rapid growth. Replacing paid or professional staff with volunteers or paraprofessionals is not seen as an option. Where prisons and jails are filled to capacity, ever greater pressures are placed on probation to handle more offenders (and more serious offenders) with budgets that simply cannot keep pace. Under these conditions, volunteers and paraprofessionals are used to supplement regular staff, and as such do not cut costs, although they may enrich and expand services.

Second, many agencies purposely restrict the use of both paraprofessionals and volunteers, particularly when budgets stop growing. Part of the reason for this is the natural tendency to tighten down, avoid innovation, and limit access from outside when the organization is threatened. In part it is simple job protection. Often it represents an understandable desire to avoid bringing on any more problems at a time when the agency is struggling to survive.

Costs of "Low-Cost" Personnel

Professional staff and employee unions often oppose the use of volunteers and paraprofessionals, at least initially, and perhaps indefinitely for some job roles. Everyone has heard of instances in which employee unions have successfully thwarted the attempt to use non-paid or non-professional staff to do PSIs or to carry partial caseloads. One chief reports that he was accused of "wrecking the system" and eventually had to back down when faced with civil service disapproval and the unanimous opposition of unions, professional associations, and even fellow managers. His crime? Using select paraprofessionals for presentence investigations.

Managers themselves may oppose using nonprofessionals and volunteers for the core tasks of probation, especially when funding bodies are looking for ways to cut agency budgets. Some feel that any evidence that lower-cost workers might be given an expanded role could weaken their position as they seek to maintain or add to regular staff.

Probation managers give many other reasons for not making greater use of volunteers. They are hard to find; fewer people are volunteering these days, and competition for their services is high. They are a great deal of trouble (they have to be trained,

supervised, and constantly replaced). They are not free (they require management and staff attention, and divert energies from other tasks). They can get the agency into legal hot water, or raise ethical questions that are difficult to answer. They are not really a part of the agency, and not being paid, they are sometimes uncommitted and not easily controlled.

David Gooch, manager of the standards and guidelines project of the National Association on Volunteers in Criminal Justice (NAVCJ) has heard all the reasons for not using volunteers. With long experience in volunteer management, he also knows first-hand that problems can develop. Nonetheless, he is convinced that probation —which today is faced with overwhelming responsibilities and "no solid answers"— must open up to supportive community groups. A strong volunteer program, he says, is one of the best ways of gaining the kind of broad understanding and commitment that can carry community corrections through the hard times ahead.

"Even if it does no better than break even in terms of cost," says Gooch, "the probation agency with a well-run volunteer program comes out ahead. The payoff may not be immediate, but in the longer run it is often substantial."

Making Good Use of Volunteers

Good managers want to harness every possible resource, and they will make use of volunteers. None of the potential problems cited by managers are insurmountable. For example, if staff and their unions are involved in developing the volunteer program, they will come to see that volunteers are not a real threat. (As David Gooch explains, volunteers and paid staff play quite different roles in the probation agency, even when they seem to be performing the same tasks. Paid staff provide continuity to agency operations; they are the resident experts in case management, and they are legally responsible for administering the law).

Volunteers, in this view, play critical roles, but only on the helping side of the probation officer's job. They should not be writing violation orders, and when they run into difficulties handling a case, they must have professional officers to turn to for help. The unique contribution of the citizen volunteer is as an advocate for probationers. With a skilled volunteer to help him gain access to community systems, the quality of service to the probationer may measurably improve.

An Integrative Approach

The NAVCJ favors the integration of volunteer programs into the probation agency, as opposed to the creation of ancillary systems. Some probation managers strongly agree. The court services department of the Dodge-Fillmore-Olmsted (Minnesota) community corrections system uses volunteers to do almost everything that paid staff do. The departmental manager attributes the success of their volunteer program in large part to its integration into agency operations. Volunteers, he says, are seen and treated as "non-paid staff." Their jobs are important, and if they are not performing acceptably they are asked to terminate. The volunteer project is located physically close to the rest of the department, so volunteers and paid staff interact daily. This builds trust and respect in both directions.

The probation agency in Connecticut also takes an integrative approach to their volunteer program. Here almost 700 volunteers man positions in almost every job category from clerical to "one-on-one" work with clients. A clear case of cost avoidance is the use of volunteers to cover every court in the state every day, replacing probation officers who once did the job at $10 to $12 an hour. Volunteers also have been trained to perform the intake function, and much of the referral intake now is done by volunteer staff. College interns do presentence investigations, and they are given full rein to "take an investigation and run with it in the community" as long as their results are checked by professional staff.

While staff in Connecticut initially were resistant to the use of volunteers in some of these less traditional areas, they now are fairly well accepted throughout the department. Top management believes that the program is successful because they have adequate administrative coverage (ten full-time coordinators and a person in central administration responsible for volunteer services), and because volunteers are treated in the same manner as professional staff.

Contracting for Volunteers

An entirely different approach has proved successful in the Milwaukee regional bureau of community corrections. Agency experience with in-house volunteer programs (including staff burnout after short periods of involvement) led to putting the function of volunteer management out to bid. In two locations (Madison and Milwaukee) contracts have been let to private vendors to administer the volunteer program —recruiting, training, and supervising volunteers and providing the probation agency with volunteer services as needed. Except for those individuals who elect to serve as "volunteer resource persons," probation staff

have little direct contact with volunteers. The agency has found
this arrangement to be quite satisfactory, since it saves proba-
tion staff a great deal of time and the agency a certain amount
of trouble. One potential problem has been noted: private
vendors can become more costly over time (one contractor raised
its charges considerably over a five-year period to cover its own
increased administrative costs).

A Model for the Resource-Poor

Even an agency in real fiscal trouble can benefit from a targeted
volunteer program. The first step is to ask: What does our
system need most from volunteers? Where can citizens do the most
good?

The probation division of the Hamilton County (Ohio) municipal
court uses volunteers in a well-defined role --to screen refer-
rals before they come to the attention of probation officers.
Each volunteer screener works four hours a day, one day a week,
and screens 5 to 8 cases a day. The commitment is for a one-year
period. Volunteers receive six weeks of training in interview-
ing, counseling, and recognition of mental health or drug abuse
problems, and they are watched closely by the intake supervisor.
Still, the program is highly cost-effective. It not only re-
places paid professionals with non-paid staff for the intake
functon, but it removes about 40% of court referrals from active
supervision.

Volunteers: Are They Worth the Trouble?

It is clear from the variety found in the field that probation
managers establish and run the kind of volunteer program that
they choose. Volunteers can be kept for show" purposes, or they
can be given important jobs to do. The agency can be opened very
broadly to community participation, or citizens can be asked to
play very specific roles. Costs can be cut by replacing paid
staff with volunteers in appropriate task areas. Or these non-
paid staff can be used to enhance and enrich agency programs,
with the added benefits of community support offsetting increased
dollar costs of service.

Volunteers are not an easy answer to an organization's resource
problems. Setting up and maintaining a volunteer program re-
quires an ongoing commitment from top management --first to
expend the resources to employ a volunteer manager (at an "oppor-
tunity cost" of one less supervising officer), then to support
that individual through the development of job descriptions,
recruitment, training, and supervision of volunteers, training of
paid staff in their use, and updating the program to meet
changing agency needs.

Yet despite all the problems that can arise, managers of suc-
cessful volunteer programs generally agree that they are well
worth the price. Most are quick to add caveats regarding their
use:

"It takes money to save money; it will cost
a few dollars to start a volunteer program,
but the payoff is high."

"If you wait until the fiscal crisis is
severe, it will be too late. Build a strong
volunteer program before things get too
rough, and while you still have the time and
resources to invest."

"There must be adequate administrative
staffing (full-time volunteer coordinator
for most programs)."

"Good management is even more important in a
volunteer program than in one staffed with
paid personnel. Volunteers don't have to put
up with low-quality management."

"Volunteers should be given meaningful,
challenging jobs, not just the routine,
humdrum jobs that no one really wants to do.
This allows the volunteer to use his or her
skills and to grow within the job. It
makes recruitment easier and drop-out rates
lower."

"Give volunteers positive feedback for a job
well done. Recognition is what they get
instead of a paycheck."

"When volunteers are to play staff support
roles, allow staff to choose whether or not
and how they will use them. Some people can
make much more productive use of volunteer
assistance than others, and it pays to start
with them."

"Keys to success are very careful selection,
adequate training and supervision, and con-
stant attention to the problem of together-
ness. It is not 'us' against 'them.' We are
all working to help 'our' probationers."

In sum, with the possible exception of very small probation offices (two or three officers) with no resources at all to devote to recruitment and training of volunteers, the expanded use of volunteers would seem to be an ideal strategy for an era of limits. In addition to cost savings (e.g., by assigning volunteers to at least some functions previously performed by paid staff) and cost avoidance (by postponing the need to hire more staff as workloads rise), managers of successful volunteer programs almost invariably cite the intangible but critically important benefits of community support. One manager put it this way:

> "Another more subtle benefit has been better rapport with the community. Most of our volunteers are middle-class housewives who have substantial influence in the community and are married to individuals who have political and economic 'clout.' By making them more aware of the aims and objectives of the department, and having them operate in sympathy with our goals, we have built a group of fairly influential people who are supportive of what we are trying to achieve."

FEES FOR PROBATION SERVICES

User charges are an important source of revenue for state and local governments. They are commonly used in pricing such public services as water, gas and electricity, transportation, higher education, and cultural and recreational facilities. In the past, governments have been reluctant to impose user fees on certain types of service (e.g., primary and secondary education, library services, court services, police and fire protection) primarily because the social costs of excluding those who are unable or unwilling to pay have been considered too high. The public in general is seen as benefitting from the delivery of these kinds of service to all, regardless of ability or inclination to pay for them.

This reluctance to charge for government services is eroding under the impact of inflation and taxpayer frustration over the rising costs of government. As the tax bite takes more and more of the average worker's paycheck, the notion of individual choice in the financing of public services --even of the public welfare variety-- becomes increasingly appealing. Still, there are cogent arguments against user charges for services of this kind, and probation services are subject to them.

Special Problems with the Supervision Fee

The involuntary status of the "consumer" makes the fee for probation supervision additionally suspect as a user charge. A major rationale for user fees in government (to allow demand for service to affect supply) is negated when the consumer is forced to buy. One of the purposes of the user charge --the generation of revenue-- admittedly is served. Others (to ration a desired product, to increase efficiency in service delivery, to place the burden of payment on those who benefit from the service) are not or are less obviously. The supervision "fee" more accurately could be called a fine.

Lacking the quasi-market effects of a real user fee, the charge for supervision may have some undesirable effects. Without a direct connection between supply and demand for service, there could be a tendency to increase the number of people to whom supervision is "supplied." If probation were to become an even marginally profitable venture through what amounts to a fine on individuals supervised, it would hardly be surprising if the "net" were to widen, taking in many who otherwise might have received no services.

Few probation managers worry about the economic rationale for the user charge or its effects on the supply side of the market equation. If they have misgivings at all (and many do), they worry that the collection of fees will contaminate the helping role of the probation officer, that the department will be saddled with unwanted paperwork, or that the costs of administering the system will exceed the fees collected. There is intense philosophical opposition within the profession to charging fees, at least for some kinds of service.

What Does Field Experience Show?

Interestingly, the problems associated with fee collection are stressed by those who do not already have fee programs in place. Managers with some first-hand experience in this area tend to emphasize the benefits.

In Texas, for example, fees for supervision are widely regarded as both an important revenue source and an effective means of communicating to the offender the need to pay one's own way. A staff director of the Texas Adult Probation Commission adds that the fee "also has proven to be helpful in 'selling' probation both statewide and in local communities by emphasizing the monetary cooperativeness of our system." Some probation officers dislike the role that monitoring collections puts them in; and managers of some small, rural agencies feel that fee charging is unworkable where poverty is the norm. But the average Texas

probation agency collects fees from 60 to 65% of eligible proba-
tioners and reportedly obtains about 30% of its budget in this
manner.

Florida also reports substantial dollar amounts from their super-
vision fee, although none goes directly into the probation de-
partment budget. This is one of several states that passed legis-
lation in the 1970s mandating supervision fees for all proba-
tioners (unless waived) and setting a standard fee (generally $10
a month). Florida's situation is unusual in that misdemeanant
probation statewide is contracted out, with the Salvation Army
being the largest contractor. Supervision fees paid directly to
contracting agencies by misdemeanants are supplemented by a per-
person per-month sum paid to contractors by the state corrections
department. Fees paid by felons under supervision by the depart-
ment equal about 15% of the annual budget, but these revenues go
into the state general fund.

A nationwide survey in 1979 located only nine states in which
fees were being charged for probation supervision.* Since that
time, however, many other jurisdictions have been moving in this
direction —examining the issues, developing and introducing
legislation, designing fee programs to fit legislation recently
passed.

California's new law (effective January 1981) authorizes county
probation departments to charge for adult and juvenile super-
vision (legislation pending provides for fees for PSIs). Not all
counties are rushing to take advantage of this potential source
of new revenue. One that has installed a user fee program is
Orange County, where probation officials report "no real prob-
lems" in design or implementation. The county auditor performed
the cost analyses (based on an "informal" time study) and the
board of supervisors set the rate (a maximum of $32. a month).
The department's financial unit is responsible for book-keeping
and records functions. Orange County managers advise that, for
departments already set up to handle restitution and fines, the
user fee should pose no new challenges. There still will be many
decisions to make and details to work out, but this department's
experience shows that there need be no major obstacles to imple-
mentation.

Some of the questions that must be answered prior to implementa-

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*   National Institute of Law Enforcement and Criminal Justice,
Fees for Correctional Services: A Survey, by Joseph H. Sasfy,
Wash., D.C., 1980.

tion of a fee program (or even prior to creation of legislation)
include:

> How much will probationers be charged?
> Should charges be designed to cover the
> costs of supervision? How much more than
> the costs of collection itself must brought
> in before the program can be considered a
> "success"?

> How will waivers be handled? What categor-
> ies of probationers will be eligible for
> waiver? Will the court determine eligibili-
> ty, or will the probation department? How
> will changes in financial status over time
> be incorporated into the decision?

> Who will collect the fees —the probation
> officer, the probation department, the
> court, the department of corrections? Could
> fee collection be contracted out to another
> agency?

> Where will the fees go? Will they be de-
> posited in a general fund or be earmarked
> for probation services? If they go to pro-
> bation, will they be available for any use
> or restricted to financing specific activi-
> ties?

> Will payment of a supervision fee (unless
> waived) be a condition of probation, and if
> so, how will non-payment be handled? Who
> will be responsible for enforcing payment,
> or for invoking penalties for failure to
> pay?

In addition to these broad policy questions, implementation plan-
ners will have to work through the numerous operational details
of paperwork and process that go into effect at various decision
points. These are the kinds of details that Orange County man-
agers admitted could be "a hassle" —those hard-to-anticipate
problems that need to be worked out as a fee program is put into
operation. To some extent, each jurisdiction must work these
out locally. The broad policy questions are being answered in
quite different ways, and forms and procedures will need to be
tailored to the policy objectives they are intended to serve.

One piece of advice that can cross jurisdictional lines easily
in these cost-conscious days is that some estimate should be made

of the likely costs of collecting fees before deciding to intro-
duce a fee program. Does a mechanism for collection already
exist? Is it able to absorb a new function, or will new staff
need to be hired? Will an investment in computers be necessary
to track payments and non-payments and establish audit trails?
How much probation officer time will be devoted to additional
paperwork, additional field contacts, additional court appear-
ances?

Fees collected (taking into account waivers as well as failures-
to-pay) should exceed the costs of collecting them, and some
effort should be put into both planning and evaluation to insure
that the investment pays off.

In Summary

There are potential problems with the user charge for probation
supervision, including possible legal challenges where fee pay-
ment is made a condition of probation. But supervision fees have
been upheld by the courts in some states, and managers of some
successful fee programs report that anticipated problems simply
have not materialized.

The strategy does seem particularly appropriate for probation
agencies that already handle collections or that have access to
units of general government that are prepared to handle some of
the accounting functions for them. Supervision fees also seem
more workable where a sizeable number of probationers are finan-
cially able to pay. Where waivers will outnumber payments such a
program probably will not be worthwhile.

Where the fee for supervision seems to raise too many problems
(or where it is not allowed by law) probation agencies can consi-
der other options. Some departments are looking more closely at
those services that directly benefit the probationer, in the
belief that these may be more appropriately charged for than
those that primarily serve the court. A concerted effort to
identify discrete services that might be provided for a fee
(preferably those the "user" wants) can turn up a number of
sources of legitimate new revenue.

Where fee programs have been successful, they:

- Bring in sometimes substantial revenues;

- Build public support for the probation de-
  partment, which is seen as helping out gen-
  eral government and the taxpayer by requir-
  ing offenders to "pay their own way."

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SHARING THE JOB WITH OTHERS

Probation agencies have always made use of outside help in ful-
filling their myriad responsibilities to the offender and to
society. In part because of the very broad mandate of offender
rehabilitation and reintegration, resource "brokerage" was a
common community corrections strategy well before the term was
even coined. Contracts with other service providers also have a
long if somewhat limited history of use in the probation field.
Both of these strategies are the object of renewed interest as
resources diminish.

In addition, some more unusual forms of responsibility sharing —
what some are calling "coproduction" or "public-private partner-
ships"— are beginning to show up in probation as in many other
areas of the public sector. Working relationships between busi-
ness and government agencies, and some intriguing mixtures of
public and private enterprise, represent possible options for the
resource-conscious probation manager.

Expanding Referrals

Use of community resources is most informally achieved through
the efforts of individual probation officers, who take the ini-
tiative in connecting offenders with treatment, training, or
other forms of assistance available in the community.

Managers who see brokerage as a means of expanding resources have
devised various ways of encouraging officers to refer clients.
Some include community resource development in officer job de-
scriptions, train staff in referral, monitoring, and feedback
mechanisms, or develop community service directories to aid in
making referrals. One manager reports that specialized case-
loads, with a single officer responsible for all probationers
referred to a particular program, can reduce confusion and im-
prove communication with service providers. Even without spec-
ialized caseloads, designating one staff member as a liaison
between the department and a given program can have beneficial
effects on interagency relationships and on referral rates.

The use of formal classification, needs assessment, and service
plans may promote referrals by demonstrating graphically to
staff that they cannot meet all client needs. Very large case-
loads in themselves may be enough. Says the chief of Fresno
County (California) probation:

> "Our staff didn't need encouragement to go
> this direction because of the sheer volume
> of business. We initially went to the bro-
> kerage concept for survival reasons. The

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concept would have been much more difficult
to sell and implement had staff had more
reasonable workloads."

The Fresno County manager notes that brokerage is especially
appropriate when you have a large number of clients with similar
needs or court orders. This department has brokered repeat drunk
drivers for the past six years. At any one time four probation
officers are responsible for about 2,000 clients, most involved
in privately operated treatment or educational programs. "While
not ideal," this manager observes, "a caseload of 400 to 500 per
officer is not impossible when a large percentage of the caseload
is involved in the same or in similar programs."

Convincing probation officers to refer more clients is only half
the battle. As public revenues decline, outside agencies, both
public and private, may become less willing to take on clients
referred to them. The lack of funding for community agencies
only compounds the reluctance of some agencies to accept correc-
tional clients. Some probation managers have found it necessary
to exert pressure on other agencies to work with their clientele:

> ". . . brokerage can be expanded by utili-
> zing already existing community agencies
> that, for one reason or another, have never
> handled criminal justice clients in the
> past. It is difficult to convince them to
> get their hands dirty in this business, but
> I have yet to see a charter or bylaws of an
> organization that states they are not sup-
> posed to handle our type of client. There
> have been occasions when we have had to
> threaten to bring the matter before their
> board of directors, but so far we have pre-
> vailed in every instance."

A somewhat more subtle approach is suggested by a manager who
works to insure that state plans for the human services include
an explicit expectation that correctional clients will be served.

Many managers recommend playing an advocacy role for service-
providing agencies, speaking for them before funding bodies and
finding other opportunities to give them public recognition for
their efforts. Monterey County has found this strategy particu-
larly effective. Maintaining regular contact with community
agencies and demonstrating a willingness to help them wherever
possible draws outside resources closer to probation while reduc-
ing suspicions and misunderstandings on both sides.

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More Formal Service Agreements

The traditional brokerage model often runs into problems as
caseloads become unwieldy or as public resources decline. The
individual officer is easily overwhelmed by large numbers of
referrals, and the growing reluctance of other agencies to accept
referrals may be beyond the capacities of individual probation
workers to overcome.

Some managers feel that there are real limits to the brokerage
strategy when resources are scarce, and that formal arrangements
must be made if client referrals are to be successful. A few go
so far as to say that money must change hands if "brokered"
services are to be reliably available, but others are finding
ways of expanding resources to clients short of service purchase.

In two offices of the Philadelphia department probation partici-
pates in a social services consortium —an interagency agreement
to cooperate in serving what tends to be a common set of clients.
Conceived not as a probation network but as a network of human
services, the interagency association has both formalized and
personalized the referral process.

The structured side of the process includes an interagency refer-
ral form, which is carried by the client to the service-providing
agency, then mailed back (saving time and telephone costs) to the
referral source with information on what will be done with the
client. The personal emphasis of the process is achieved by
encouraging staff to form one-to-one, first-name relationships
with individuals who work in other agencies. When the probation
officer calls someone he knows to get an appointment for a
client, the personal (rather than organizational) relationship
tends to make the referral easier and more successful.

At the interorganizational level, the consortium is governed by a
set of by-laws and a signed cooperative agreement that includes a
requirement to provide systematic feedback to sending agencies on
clients served.

Getting to the point where such an agreement is signed may be a
sensitive process. In North West Philadelphia, the consortium
was initiated by the unit supervisor of the probation office, who
invited top managers from four of the larger social agencies to a
planning meeting concerned with coordination of services. This
group then agreed to serve as a steering committee to create the
consortium. They sponsored a training session in CRMT and
interagency collaboration, to which they invited a larger group
of social service agency representatives. The process, in other
words, may need to start small and gradually grow in size and
significance.

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Community Resource Management Teams

The social services consortium in Philadelphia revolves around the CRMT approach to service delivery (although it could be adapted for use without staff teams). CRMT itself also can be a major strategy for resource expansion and conservation, at least where it is fully implemented.

The CRMT model consists of four basic design elements: (1)an emphasis on "normative" or survival needs of probationers (jobs, training, drug treatment, etc.) as opposed to more traditional clinical needs assessment; (2)pooling of cases; (3)teams (supervisor, officers, secretaries) serving geographically defined communities; and (4)service brokerage and advocacy of clients in the community.

The cost savings of the CRMT approach derive from these characteristics. According to consultants who help to install and evaluate these programs, normative needs assessment typically surfaces from 30 to 40% of the pooled cases who are not in need of service. These cases are banked or placed in administrative caseloads. They report by mail or are seen by the secretarial support staff.

Accountability also is enhanced by the team approach. Behavioral objectives for clients and action plans for meeting them are developed by the team and implemented through assignment of specific responsibilities to individual team members. Action plans, progress reports, and completion dates for each task are recorded in a master calendar, which is in effect a systematic tracking and monitoring system. The master calendar not only accounts for client activities, it accounts for team member assignments and accomplishments as well. Working from the calendar, which is maintained by clerical support staff, it is possible for teams to schedule monthly workloads, adjust them to meet emergencies, and evaluate the accomplishment of goals both at a point in time and cumulatively.

The CRMT approach also enables the specialization of tasks (one team member handles all court appearances on a given day), with associated efficiencies for the unit. The inclusion of clerical support staff as integral members of each team frees officers from many time-consuming activities. And the "wholesaling" of brokered services (CRMT officers concentrate on placing groups of probationers where possible) tends to save time and resources when it is successful.

The CRMT concept has been used widely in the field by departments hoping to promote referral of clients and to conserve in-house resources for other activities. Some California probation agen-

cies report that moving to CRMT made it possible to carry an otherwise unmanageable workload following major staff reductions, or that the strategy has permitted officers to focus on mandated investigations and court reports.

Most of the problems experienced in implementing the concept come from staff opposition to the team approach and to the increased structure and accountability that necessarily accompanies it. These problems are associated with any attempt to make operations more efficient through the use of staff teams (e.g., in PSIs) or to require staff to account more closely for their time (e.g., management information systems). Many officers find it difficult to relinquish control over their caseloads (either by internal pooling or by referral), in part because of professional training, but also because many judges continue to hold them individually responsible for cases they accept from the court. Many also find onerous the central control and coordination required by team work (e.g., the need to let someone know where you are at all times, to share information, or to schedule in concert with others). "Master calendaring" may increase productivity and accountability, but it may alienate staff accustomed to working independently.

Unions too may oppose teams, as they tend to do any organizational change that holds even a potential for staff reductions. A pilot test of CRMT in one county probation department did not run beyond the year-long experiment because of strong union opposition. Probation officers reportedly liked the new arrangement, but their union leadership was convinced they might lose membership. The manager of that department learned the hard way that unions may have to be involved in the planning of any change.

Where opposition to the CRMT model is great, components of it can be applied, and at least some portion of the potential cost savings achieved. In Connecticut, for example, CRMT has been introduced without the pooling of caseloads envisioned by the original model. Team members carry individual (though specialized) caseloads, but work together in resource development and other common tasks.

Contracts with Private Service Providers

Many probation agencies traditionally have purchased some services from private community-based agencies under contract. Generally these contracts have been for such "hard" services as bedspace, transportation, education, clinical evaluations, and other kinds of service for which the agency has no in-house capability.

More recently, there has been talk of expanding the number and range of private contractors as a means of dealing with declining public resources. Probation, like other government functions, is being challenged to broaden its reliance on private service providers in "soft" service areas as well, and even to put a service out to bid whenever it can be provided more cost-effectively by others.

The arguments for contracts with private agencies are appealing. The private vendor is said to be more cost-effective (because of economies of scale, market incentives, fewer regulations, no civil service), thus permitting more productive use of the tax dollar. Private agencies also are said to be less inhibited by political constraints, and therefore free to experiment with more innovative programming. Reliance on the private sector is supposed to add flexibility to government because of the relative ease with which public programs using private service providers can be set up and dismantled.

How much of this is reality, and how much myth? Probation managers are divided over the question of cost-effectiveness. Some claim that private services tend to be cheaper (especially because of lower salaries and staffing ratios), but that service quality cannot be relied on. Others maintain that high-quality service can be obtained from private vendors, but that they are not often more efficient or less costly. A few have found private agency contracts to be highly cost-effective, at least in certain well-defined service areas.

Cost-Effectiveness of Private Contracts

Connecticut makes use of private vendors under contract to provide temporary housing, emergency drug-treatment and medical service, employment placement in difficult cases, and many other services the agency is not equipped to provide in-house. The probation director sees this as cost-effective ("They can provide quite a bit more for less in dollars"), and he does not believe that service quality tends to drop. Contracts are monitored for performance by the office of planning and research. All vendors send in monthly reports on numbers and types of clients served and services provided. Cross-referencing with contracts let by other agencies is done to "insure that we are getting our money's worth."

Most probation agency contracts with private service providers seem to be in "hard" service areas, and most are for supplemental services that cannot easily be provided by probation staff. The chief of the Milwaukee regional community corrections bureau, whose agency's private contracts total several million dollars a year, says that contracting for hard, measurable services can be

quite cost-effective. Performance-based contracts for such services, he says, should contain explicit statements of: (1)services to be provided; (2)measurement units; (3)allowable costs; (4)reporting requirements; and (4)a clear referral-rejection policy.

With such performance standards spelled out in advance, the Milwaukee bureau has tied funding of private vendors to their performance, paying 80% of the total amount during the life of the contract and the remaining 20% if performance standards are met or exceeded.

Flexibility through Contracting

Even if private vendors are not always cheaper, their use can allow the probation department to scale down its own operations without losing the capacity to respond to changing needs. The Dodge-Fillmore-Olmsted (Minnesota) community corrections system adds flexibility to its programming by means of a "purchase-of-service budget." This portion of the budget, separate from the core of traditional, basic services funded as in-house programs, provides some capability to respond to emergency needs of individual clients as well as to critical concerns that surface in the environment (e.g., increased public interest in programs for particular types of offenders). The court services manager reports that these funds are limited and generally are used up before the end of the year, but they permit probation to operate as a full-service agency on a restricted-service budget.

Flexibility is an important reason for purchasing services rather than providing them directly. Often it is less complicated to arrange for the purchase of needed services than to go through the bureaucratic process of setting up a new program. It also may be easier to alter or terminate a contract, as needs or funding levels change, than to make changes in agency programs themselves. Because private agencies are not subject to civil service rules, and are generally free from union restrictions, they are seen by some public managers as in a better position to "hire staff when they need them, and lay them off when they don't."

These characteristics make the private agency contract especially useful when the public manager wishes to pilot a new program, retaining the option of discontinuing it after a test run. It is this "contingent" approach to program implementation that is so desirable under conditions of uncertainty and change. Yet private vendors understandably resist contributing to public agency flexibility at their own expense. They sometimes lobby as a group for funding security, and they often respond politically,

when threatened, in ways that ignore the public-sector chain of command.

The public manager can make productive use of private vendors in testing new program concepts and styles, but the expectations of both parties are best made known and dealt with at the outset. Provisions can be made for some security on both sides.

A Service Network Under Contract

Designers of a San Mateo County (California) network of private youth programs took into account the needs of both government and private vendors in drawing up contracts for alternatives to probation. "It is unwise and unfair," said one of the architects of this unusual plan, "to seduce the private sector into a working relationship with government unless there is a commitment to keeping them involved."

The San Mateo County youth services network is a bold experiment in sharing the job. It derives from one probation manager's conviction that returning some responsibility for wayward youth to their home communities was "the right thing to do." Supported wholeheartedly by the criminal justice planning council and the county executive, this manager turned over a portion of the core probation task to private, locally designed and administered programs serving youth.

That these programs also work under performance-based contracts that tie funding to reductions in public agency workloads makes the San Mateo model especially appropriate for an era of fiscal limits. Funding for the youth programs actually comes from a variety of sources —the county probation department, city police departments, school districts, and a number of private sources, including United Way. Some also receive a substantial amount from the private agency (usually a youth club or recreation center) that administers them.

The relationship to the county is an interesting one, based on a contractual expectation that each program will produce a measurable reduction in probation referrals coming from the area it serves. "Referral reduction rates" are determined for each program by comparison with base years, and for each case not referred the program receives an amount calculated to equal what probation intake, investigation, supervision, and detention would have cost the county. Some stability for both vendors and the county is provided by the reimbursement formula, under which a program's annual earnings can neither exceed nor fall below its referral reduction rate by more than 10%.

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Some Public-Private Blends

In some jurisdictions, the public and private sectors are not simply working together under contract or informal service agreements; they are forming new kinds of organizations —"third-sector" agencies— that represent an intriguing commingling of public and private enterprise.

Industry-Corrections-Interface (ICI) is a private nonprofit corporation sponsored by the Los Angeles office of the U.S. Probation Service. Incorporated in 1975, ICI is designed to permit this public agency to do things it has not traditionally done and is not organizationally or financially set up to do —offender and ex-offender skill training, preparation for work, and job placement.

ICI contracts with employers whose programs meet stated requirements (a controlled, structured, high-incentive production effort paying at least minimum wage to start and providing for increases based on performance) to provide work experience and skill training. ICI staff also work with probation officers, but do not assume supervision responsibilities.

Functioning in this way between the public service of community corrections and the private employer, ICI offers the probation service the benefits of both the private sector contract (increased flexibility, constantly updated work environments) and direct service delivery (greater involvement in and control over the job preparation and placement function).

ICI also performs functions that neither the probation agency nor the private employer is able or willing to do —it takes responsibility for developing in clients work ethics and attitudes; it provides training in "life skills"; and it offers educational testing and guidance. Federal probation is not set up to provide direct services such as these, and business employers are reluctant to get involved in them.

ICI has tax-exempt status as an education services facility. It has no capital base or source of funds other than program contracts or contributions. (It serves federal, state, and local probation and parole, and accepts clients from work furlough or work release, from "outside" programs of prison or correctional industries, from halfway houses, and from community-based programs funded by CETA or other sources.) ICI favors working under a performance contract providing for a fixed unit price per client trained and placed in an unsubsidized job in the private sector. (Unit price is established by analyzing the costs of operating the worksite center and dividing that cost by the number of participants.)

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A national version of the same model is represented by the Community Alliance Program for Ex-Offenders (CAPE), which is jointly sponsored by the National Alliance of Business and the U.S. Probation Office. This also is a "third-sector" public-private organization focused on world-of-work orientation, job training, and employment placement services for the hard-to-employ. The NAB and the U.S. Probation Office have a number of innovative plans in the works, including a multi-jurisdictional model that will free the ex-offender employment program from the usual restrictions of jurisdictional boundaries.

A small number of probation agencies below the federal level also are making use of the third-sector organization to permit greater flexibility in revenue production and use. Where these private nonprofit corporations have been created they may allow the court and/or probation department to put together an advantageous combination of public and private resources and capacities. Funneling monies through the corporation may help probation to survive budget cuts by attracting new sources of funds (e.g., foundation grants, contributions), by permitting the continuance of non-mandated programs, by providing a mechanism for citizen participation, and even by avoiding certain public-sector costs.

One of the best examples of the nonprofit corporation serving probation is Citizens for Better Community Courts, Inc., which funds the Earn-It program —in effect, a partnership between the Quincy, Mass., district court and the local business community. Through this corporation the Earn-It program offers restitution and community work as alternatives to probation and to jail, involving local employers in the effort to rehabilitate offenders and recompense their victims. A program like Earn-It, of course, does not need a third-sector corporation to run it (the Quincy program, in fact, is being turned over to probation). But the existence of such a hybrid organization may offer many opportunities for adaptive kinds of "contingent" management such as current conditions so often require.

Costs and Benefits of Sharing the Job

A comprehensive survey of probation agencies today undoubtedly would turn up many other innovative approaches to the use of public and private service providers under contract or not. In one jurisdiction or another almost all services traditionally a part of the probation repertoire have been performed by "outsiders." Contracted services now include core functions of presentence investigation and probation supervision (Florida's contract with the Salvation Army to provide misdemeanant probation is perhaps the best known example).

We may see even more dramatic deviations from the norm in the future as the division of labor between public and private sectors undergoes what appears to be an historic change. Public managers in the 1980s probably will be looking more closely at the private sector for resource-expansion and job-sharing possibilities.

In considering the use of private-sector services, the probation manager need not buy all the rhetoric about the efficiencies to be gained through "free-market" competition. Still, where outside public or private resources are available (and willing to serve probation's special clientele), and where the necessary legal and administrative authority exists, the various arrangements for sharing the job can:

- Expand and diversify resources available to the probation agency;

- Add flexibility to agency programming, and simplify policy and program termination when appropriate;

- Create new networks and constituencies, and increase public visibility and understanding of the probation mission;

- And many jobs can be done by others at least equally well at lower cost.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

Information on the use of volunteers in probation is available from the National Association on Volunteers in Criminal Justice at the University of Alabama and from Volunteers in Probation at Royal Oak, Mich. (VIP has merged with NAVCJ, but will continue to operate for the next five years.) Both offer technical assistance, training, and information. NAVCJ is developing standards and guidelines for the use of volunteers throughout the criminal justice system.

The NILECJ (Sasfy) volume cited in the text is a good summary of issues and practices related to fees for supervision and other services.

Contracting for Correctional Services in the Community, by Gene Kassebaum and others, (NILECJ, 1978), describes contracting arrangements, legal frameworks, characteristics of service providers, problems associated with contracting, etc. for a national sample of community corrections organizations.

Administrative offices of Industry Corrections Interface, Inc. (ICI) are in Vernon, Calif. Information on this public-private partnership or on the national CAPE program also is available from the federal probation office in Los Angeles. Contact: Jack Cocks.

Information, technical assistance, and training in CRMT is available from Training Associates, Boulder, Colo. Contact: Herber Sigurdson.

Technical assistance and training in setting up and operating a volunteer program also are offered by Tom Colina and Larry Muse of the Hamilton County Probation Division in Cincinnati.

A clear-eyed assessment of myths and realities concerning "market" and "quasi-market" options (user fees, private sector contracting, "privatization," and public-private competition) is offered in: Jeffrey D. Straussman, "More Bang for Fewer Bucks? Or How Local Governments Can Rediscover the Potentials (and Pitfalls) of the Market," Public Administration Review, vol. 41 (special issue), 1981, pp. 150-58.

New sources of funds in addition to fees for supervision are suggested in a recent publication dealing with revenue production, cost "offsets," cost consequences, and cost benefits. A practical guide to expanding probation resources: California Probation, Parole, and Correctional Association, Economic Strategies in Probation, by Timothy Fitzharris, Sacramento, 1981.

VII. BUILDING CONSTITUENCIES AND NETWORKS

As public revenues decline, and competition for them increases, there is much talk of the need for new constituencies, for strong ties to networks of related services, and for linkages to lawmakers and funding bodies. Many probation managers are paying more attention to connections with those organizations and groups that make the probation job feasible, even in the best of times, and whose support and cooperation may become critical when resources are short.

It is often said that probation has no constituency, that there is no one "out there" who cares whether or not its services are cut. Yet for some departments this clearly is not the case. Skilled "institution-builders" (Chapter III) have been able to mobilize substantial and quite varied sources of cooperation and support.

Building constituencies and networks generally involves managers (and often their staffs) in a wide range of activities aimed at breaking down artificial barriers between probation and the community it serves. There is some politicking involved, and some of what has come to be called the "selling" of probation. But it must go beyond that. In sharp contrast to more traditional forms of public relations, current support-building efforts are:

> Aggressive (proactive, initiating, not waiting for others to come forward with support);
>
> Sustained (not intermittent, but ongoing; not only around budget time or only in response to attack);
>
> Targeted (tailored to the situation, appropriate to the functions the department performs, oriented to particular groups known to be receptive or potentially so);
>
> Diverse (recognizing that no isolated "public relations" effort will be sufficient, and that constituencies and networks are not homogeneous, but multiple and varied);
>
> Two-way (responsive to communications and initiatives from others; not just sending

out information or acting on the environment, but allowing others to affect probation, encouraging them to get involved).

As resources become more scarce, organizations such as probation become increasingly dependent on outsiders —not just to stand up for them at budget hearings, but to work with them in ways that make it possible to meet their most basic goals. Ironically, at the very time when cooperation and coordination are most needed, there is a strong tendency to turn inward to protect one's own turf, and few resources to spare for purposes of helping others.

It takes an equally strong initiative on the part of organizational leadership to overcome such parochial tendencies, to convince others —within and outside the agency— that it "pays" to work together, that turfs can be shared without being surrendered, that information helps everyone, and that honesty and openness are worth a try.

OPENING UP TO OTHERS

The chief of probation in Fresno County, California, describes his department's approach to constituency-building as aggressive, open-system, participative, and oriented very broadly toward other human services, offices and boards of county government, community groups and organizations, and the public generally. Constituencies are built, this manager explains, by involving others in departmental activities, by giving them a stake in probation's success. "Linkages are built on common tasks and projects, not just on the notable ambition to improve relationships."

Interagency Networks

The fulcrum of this department's "networking" activities is the Fresno County Juvenile Court Interagency Committee, to which probation contributes both political and financial support. The group is large and its membership inclusive (40 to 50 community organizations are represented). The decision-making subcommittee includes the heads of nine public agencies working in criminal justice, education, and mental health. These nine agencies share resources and work closely on common problems. A second subcommittee allows representatives of planning and advisory commissions and private agencies to review and comment on the work of the core decision-makers and to participate on task forces. The third subgroup folds in a variety of state and local public and private agencies with an interest in serving youth.

The group surrounding the juvenile court in Fresno may be more extensive than most, but structures similar to its core decision-

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making group are found in many jurisdictions. Some of these groups are full-fledged organizations with formal names and by-laws; others are quite informal —a group of agency managers who meet once a week over lunch.

In Kern County, California, a weekly breakfast meeting primarily for social purposes is used as an opportunity to plan for more formal contacts if and when they are needed. The probation chief in this county describes the frequent interaction as vital to maintaining cooperation among agencies, but stresses that cooperation is more an attitude than a mechanical process of getting together at a particular place and time. It is essential, this manager explains, to develop mutual trust among top managers. Each must be confident that communicating agency problems and plans to others will not endanger his own operations.

The Kern County chief adds that not only do interagency contacts reinforce the ground rules and reduce the number of external surprises, but the regular exposure to other managers exerts a kind of peer pressure "to go back and shape up your own agency."

Networking is a fact of life for Community Corrections Act jurisdictions, whose participation in an interagency, intergovernmental structure throws them into constant contact with other organizations. The Dodge-Fillmore-Olmsted (Minnesota) community corrections system draws on the resources of three counties, and must be responsive to organizations, groups, and publics in each. The interagency advisory board that oversees all operations, and its program committees (responsible for individual programs), bring together representatives of agencies and groups with an interest in community corrections. These individuals —representing health, welfare, social services, the court, law enforcement, schools, county government, and lay citizens— provide major input to planning and priority-setting, program implementation and evaluation, budget preparation and defense.

The court services administrator in this tri-county system observes that decisions work better when a cross-section of those agencies and groups impacted are involved in making them. Traditional conflicts, he points out, still exist, but disagreements (e.g., between law enforcement and the helping professions) are worked out more easily in an interagency context. This manager feels that some conflict is healthy —a "positive friction" among different functions keeps everyone on their toes. Mutual criticism can be a force for constructive change when it is offered in an interagency setting.

Joint Program Management

Among the many ways Fresno County agencies work together is

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through joint program management. The county has three police-probation teams, and health, welfare, and probation jointly staff a crisis resolution effort (a private agency provides the residential component). Two cooperatively managed programs bring together probation and the junior high schools. Fresno also has the largest NYPUM (National Youth Project Using Mini-Bikes) in the country, with 14 separate groups, each involving public schools, law enforcement, probation, the YMCA, and service clubs.

Joint programming may importantly affect the "character" of the probation organization. In Connecticut, for example, probation's strong ties to law enforcement are reflected in (and enhanced by) collaborative efforts to deal with common problems (e.g., a police-probation media campaign against drunk driving, joint staffing of a crime suppression unit). This department's continuing concern for rehabilitation is communicated through cooperative efforts in other areas (e.g., mental health and probation worked together to set up a diagnostic clinic). Lacking this balance in external programming, a department could come to be seen as exclusively aligned with a particular group —whether or not it intends or wishes to be seen in this way. Leadership should be conscious of the <u>effects on organizational character</u> as interagency programs are planned and implemented.

Interagency programming is somewhat more trouble than going it alone. Successful joint efforts require a willingness to share turf, information, recognition, and rewards. Also required are ongoing negotiation of differences and special efforts to avoid misunderstandings (it helps to put expectations in writing).

But joint program management often pays off in a broader base of support. <u>A natural constituency for probation</u>, the Fresno chief points out, is built into the design. Coordinating efforts and sharing resources also makes sense to taxpayers and their elected representatives.

And success builds on success. As staff of different agencies learn about the roles, responsibilities, and concerns of other participants in a joint program, a climate of acceptance and understanding is created that encourages both formal and informal cooperation in other areas.

Sharing the Job

In times of fiscal cutback many managers will try to protect their own by severing ties to agencies with which they have had contractual or other exchange relationships. Cooperative efforts of all kinds may be suddenly abandoned or allowed to wither away. Contracts are not renewed. Fewer units of service are purchased. With even core services threatened by cutback, it is hard to

justify diverting scarce resources to "outsiders."

It would be naive to suggest that there are no costs in sharing the job with others, that outside agencies will never compete with probation or press for a larger portion of available resources, that they will always do a quality job and never get probation into trouble.

Some managers have found, however, that contracting and brokering of services are ways of giving others a stake in the probation operation. Organizations that take part of the probation workload come to depend on probation for their own continuity ("They live or die by our referrals"). They also come to understand the problems and responses of the community corrections system and help to spread the word.

In some jurisdictions, a willingness to share the job may bring political rewards as well. In Monterey County, California, probation has taken the initiative in farming out responsibilities to public and private agencies in ways that make sense within the department's own resource brokerage approach. The considerable energy managers and staff of this department put into the outside service network has paid off handsomely in environmental support (the county executive is particularly approving, pointing to probation as an example for other departments to follow).

Citizen Involvement

Many probation agencies traditionally have kept lay citizens at arm's length, despite claims that their services are "community-based." Volunteers have been used in some roles, and occasional campaigns launched to "educate" the public. But information has tended to flow one way, and the agency generally has controlled the nature and extent of community input.

Probation managers today are talking about opening up to citizen involvement in ways that <u>allow them to impact</u> the organization. Fresno County has an explicit policy of providing opportunities for citizens to influence the priorities, directions, and purposes of the department.

One of several avenues for community influence on departmental policy in Fresno are the citizen-staffed juvenile justice and delinquency prevention commissions. Relationships between the department and these community-based advisory groups are described by the probation chief as "very delicate, but extremely important." Probation provides these commissions with staff support and some training money, but tries not to "overwhelm" them or overshadow their efforts.

Similar advice comes from the Contra Costa County (California) chief, whose juvenile justice commission is given substantial credit for the strength of that department in the post-Proposition 13 era. The commission was particularly active over the decade preceding the tax cut measure, involved in "everything affecting young people," with liaisons with "anything touching juvenile probation." One key to the commission's success has been its autonomy from the probation department. Unlike these groups in some other jurisdictions, the Contra Costa County commission is not identified with the probation department, not viewed as a "rubber stamp" for probation management. Commission members are carefully selected to maintain county-wide representation, and the group has considerable legitimacy with local agencies of all kinds. It has been able to promote probation without sacrificing its own credibility.

Citizen involvement in Dodge-Fillmore-Olmsted is achieved through the community corrections advisory board (about half of the 23-member group are lay citizens) and its individual program committees (each includes two members of the advisory board and five to seven citizens). Through the board and committee structure, citizen involvement in major decisions is a day-to-day reality.

On maintaining good relationships with citizens functioning in an advisory capacity, the court services director in Dodge-Fillmore-Olmsted notes that people must feel that they can influence the planning process. The relationship to the department must be real —not just for show, not just so it can be said that "we have citizen involvement." People must be kept informed. They must have some ability to ask the difficult questions, and enough "clout" to know that their concerns will be addressed.

Making a Contribution

Opening up to others means more than involving outsiders in probation operations, or working together on joint projects. Especially when resources are scarce throughout the public sector, a commitment to networks and constituencies means getting involved in the projects and plans of others.

Fresno has taken this notion and made it a core departmental policy. "Probation managers must broaden their perspectives," says the Fresno chief. Instead of sticking rigidly to their own narrowly defined agendas, they should find ways of working more broadly within those of their communities and governments.

In Fresno, probation staff have been involved on county-wide task forces to develop a new county accounting system, new budget procedures, or policies for the use of county vehicles. Management is active on the department heads' council, the task force

on management benefits, and other committees dealing with such county-wide issues as salaries, incentives, and training or the impact of management exchange. Contributing to general county government is seen as a responsibility of probation as a county service. It also is seen as strengthening probation's position with important decision-makers.

Probation staff in Fresno are given time, support, and recognition for participating in community groups and organizations that share interests and goals with the probation department or the justice system. Staff members here work with advisory councils and commissions and serve on numerous task forces and planning groups. Involvement in community affairs is defined as part of the probation officer's job.

Fresno probation staff may help another agency to design or set up a program even if that program will not be jointly managed. Helping others to achieve their goals is recognized as a means of building networks and constituencies. The benefits to probation are subtle but sure.

Scarce probation resources, of course, should not be spread too thinly or squandered on poorly thought-out plans to "get involved." But any department can find areas beyond their normal or traditional range of activity —areas in which their contributions can promote both the goals of others and the credibility of probation as a community-oriented public service.

Even a fiscally strapped department may have some resources to share —information, facilities (e.g., work space in the office), equipment (e.g., access to computer, use of autos), expertise (e.g., staff skills on loan). Political support for the goals and programs of a related agency may be the most valuable contribution a well-positioned probation manager can make.

INCREASING ACCOUNTABILITY

Support-building in an era of fiscal limits generally requires that managers be more responsive to the concerns of citizens and their representatives in policy-making and administrative roles. Departmental managers must be attuned to the focal issues of their jurisdiction, and they must be prepared to show how their agency contributes to the achievement of prominent local goals.

Public agencies that do not perform functions perceived as worth the investment —or cannot demonstrate that they do— may be passed over at budget time. In a snowballing loss of power, prestige, and more tangible resources, the organization may become increasingly less effective (and less able to command needed resources) over time.

Like other efforts to build support, accountability to those who fund probation should be proactive, ongoing, appropriate, varied, and two-way. The most successful relationships to "enabling networks" (those who allocate authority and resources) tend to be built by managers who cultivate them constantly and with great care.

To these managers, accountability means more than assembling facts to justify the budget. It means keeping policy-makers informed, providing them with the data they need not only to make good decisions, but to maintain accountability to their own employers —the voting and taxpaying public.

This means anticipating needs for information; it means seeking out opportunities to be helpful. Departmental managers should put themselves in the shoes of those to whom they are accountable: To what pressures are they responding? What problems must they try to solve?

The Importance of Being Honest

Honesty is probably the single most critical element of a good relationship between departmental management and boards of supervisors, the county executive, state budget office, and others responsible for the allocation and use of public funds. As one busy county executive commented, "The best advice I could offer any department head is, if you can't explain it, go back and rethink it. Don't try to sell us with a lot of fancy words."

An honest and forthright stance includes admitting failure and acknowledging shortcomings where the facts cannot be disputed. The director of court services in Dodge-Fillmore-Olmsted observes that, if appropriately handled, an admission of failure may lead people to believe you more and to have greater faith in what you are doing. Even the general public will appreciate your honesty, and come to expect that what you tell them will be the truth.

In this context, accountability means more than "proving" that your agency is indispensable (which the term, unfortunately, has come to imply). It means taking a balanced position —advertising your strengths, to be sure, but being realistic and straightforward about any weaknesses or mistakes. This not only builds credibility where it counts; it has strategic advantages as well. Knowing more than any outsider about your weak spots —and letting it be known that you have taken them into account— puts potential critics at a disadvantage and may defuse opposition before it gets started.

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Facts and Figures Help

In any relationship involving accountability, the bottom line is communicating the facts. People want to know what you do and how well you do it before they throw you their support. They must know something about your operation if they are expected to play an oversight role.

Many of the strategies and tools now being adopted by probation managers are designed to increase this kind of accountability. Classification, structured case management, workload measures, management information systems, and program budgeting all help probation managers to answer questions that pertain to performance and accountability. What kinds of people are probation resources concentrated on? What exactly do they receive, and how well do they do? What would be the impact of a cutback in professional staff? Can more cases be banked? How long does it take and what does it cost to do a PSI?

Any tool that aids in the collection, analysis, and presentation of information is going to be valuable to managers in times of resource scarcity. Many probation managers report that they would not be without their MIS or classification scheme, and that having detailed figures on time and costs has paid off well at budget time.

But tools and technology are no substitute for imagination, sensitivity, and dedication to the task. One manager may have access to a powerful computer and a large data base, but not know what to do with them. Another squeezes manually gathered and analyzed information for all it is worth. One may have all the right information, but fail to get it to the right people at the right time. Another seems to sense that interpersonal factors are central to the accountability equation. Management style plays an important part.

Management Style

The manager most effective in working with "enablers" is the one who seems most knowledgeable about his organization. When he meets with those to whom he is accountable it is obvious that he has done his homework. When asked a question he does not hedge, hide, or make excuses. If he does not have the information at hand, he offers to get it, and he does so without delay.

Using routine information submitted quarterly by division managers the chief in Contra Costa County keeps running tabs on all probation programs, noting monthly changes in workloads, caseloads, sources of referrals, and unit costs. Using workload "benchmarks" as a standard for comparison, he charts changes in

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the spread between staff needed and staff available to handle demands placed on the department. Year-by-year comparisons of workload and budget graphically show how the department has been affected by county, state, and federal cutbacks, as well as what is being done to offset budget cuts.

Accounting for his department's use of public funds is a constant for this probation chief, who always seems to be one step ahead of those who would assess his operations. Apparently at home with numbers and statistics, he keeps a surprising amount of data in his head. The information he works with is primitive compared with some, and he has few tools to help him. But he continues to come up with new ways of looking at and presenting the data. (This effort is ongoing throughout the year, but tends to peak at budget time with an elaborate display of facts and figures. Reference data to back up his 1981-82 budget consisted of 35 pages of well-organized narrative interspersed with numerous charts and graphs. Documented past and estimated future impacts of cuts in the probation budget was a dominant theme; the many ways the department serves the justice system and the county was another.)

Accountability means getting information to the right people, but it also means listening to what they have to say. Effective managers see accountability as communication, not just "selling" or defending the budget. Spending time at the state legislature, attending regular meetings of the county board, consulting with the county executive or with members of the state budget office --in interchanges such as these is accountability realized.

Where strong and effective linkages to policy-makers exist, probation managers are seen as well-informed professionals, good managers of money, flexible in the positions they take, willing to look at alternatives and to work with the offices of general government to come up with solutions that are acceptable to all. Such credibility and respect are not gained in a day; they are built over the years as part of the effort to promote a recognizable and supportable departmental image.

MARKETING PROBATION SERVICES

There is some "selling" in every constituency-building effort. Where the goal is to build support for probation as an organization, there must be some marketing of its programs and services. People must be made aware of what it is about probation that is worth supporting, and this means getting the word out.

What distinguishes the more effective marketing efforts is that they are not just advertising. Like marketing in the business

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world, the selling of public programs today should include ongoing assessment of the market itself --what consumers want, how they perceive the services offered, how programs might be modified to increase consumer satisfaction, and how all these factors change over time.

This does not mean that probation must slavishly follow public fads. It goes without saying that managers must rely on their professional judgment for guidance in program planning. All that is implied by the marketing strategy is that some attention is paid to the fact that there are "consumer" groups out there, and that their needs and perceptions are important.

Responsible and responsive marketing of public programs can improve services by identifying and, where appropriate, accommodating the needs of those who use them.

Analyzing the Market

The first step is to identify who your consumers are. What organizations, agencies, individuals, or groups consider probation a valuable service? Who might be added to this list if only they were made aware of the ways probation serves them?

Probation's consumers are to some extent defined by statutory mandate, by principles of the profession, and by the mission of the organization. But even within these limits there is generally some latitude for imaginative market development.

Probation's consumers generally include the judiciary and members of the law enforcement community --do the district attorney and the public defender also see probation as serving their needs? What about the business community? State corrections? The schools? Whose job is simplified, whose lives made safer by the existence of probation or any of its programs?

What potential, yet untapped, markets are out there? Are there groups or agencies that would welcome new services if some way could be found to provide them? Would minor modifications of existing programs meet their needs?

Once the various consumer groups have been identified, strategies for reaching them can be planned. These efforts probably will be multiple and varied; certainly they will need to be tailored to their targets. Some may be designed to inform consumers about available services; others will probe their needs and preferences or ask them for suggestions.

The consumer survey is one way some departments communicate with their publics. In Kern County, a survey of local residents

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sought to gauge public awareness of and opinions about probation programs. The survey instrument, sent to a 2% random sample of local telephone listings, helped probation managers to decide what kinds of programming to emphasize.

The court services department in Dodge-Fillmore-Olmsted administered a survey instrument to clients over a period of three years. This strategy not only provided useful input from an often forgotten consumer group, but focused supportive attention on the department for its sensitivity to users. "Wouldn't it be nice," observed a newspaper editorial, "if more government agencies would ask their clients how well they thought they were doing."

An LEAA experiment with changes in the presentence investigation process (Chapter V) used the consumer survey as a major tool for assessing user perceptions of existing and redesigned PSI reports. Surveys prepared for judges, attorneys, supervising probation officers, and state corrections officials asked how each consumer group felt about the reports prepared for them. Were the reports useful? Did they contain extraneous information? Did they arrive on time? Did they affect decision-making? How might they be made to better serve their needs?

This effort to reach various user groups with specially targeted questionnaires underscored how different their needs really are. It may not be possible to serve all consumers with a single product, but knowing the range of needs helps to make decisions about service quality more purposeful.

Surveys, of course, are not the only, or even necessarily the best, way of evaluating the market. Many other formal and informal methods are used by managers whose "antennae" are finely tuned to the environment. Virtually every interagency or interpersonal contact can be a source of market information. Even your worst critics, if encouraged to do so, may come up with usable suggestions for change.

Increasing Consumer Satisfaction

There generally are ways of increasing consumer satisfaction (even in times of shrinking budgets) once it is clear what consumers want. Sometimes it is simply a matter of packaging existing programs for greater visibility and understanding. In other areas what may be required are a few simple changes in procedure, changes that get products to their destination faster or provide slightly different kinds of service. On occasion, a new program may be easily initiated at very low cost, yet bring in considerable new support for the department.

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A small district office in New Hampshire now includes a victim interview in the presentence report, giving the public a chance to be heard in court. Management here is working on a plan to use volunteers to do victim interviews even in cases that do not involve a PSI. Hard hit by fiscal cutbacks, this agency must be creative in its efforts to increase consumer satisfaction with no large outlay in resources.

Many departments are adding or placing new emphasis on such supposedly popular programs as restitution, community service, and aid to victims of crime. Charging fees for supervision or other services also is said to pay off in public support. If such programs fit with the mission and mandate of a probation agency, and if a "market audit" shows support for them, managers may move confidently in these directions. If it really feels "wrong" to charge probationers for supervision —or to make any other changes in departmental programs— the relative importance of pleasing the consumer should be carefully reassessed.

Pleasing the consumer often requires not a new program, but some reasonable changes in agency procedures. Judges complain that reports to the court are difficult to read, that they are slow to arrive, or that much of the information they contain is not useful in sentencing. The police feel stuck with two jobs when they must arrest and book a lawbreaker on probation. Business groups see their interests threatened by the presence of a halfway house in the shopping district. In many small or significant ways, probation products and procedures can be altered to make them more useful to consumers, often with no substantial disruption to the department.

Improving Communication

A market orientation means seeking ways to meet consumer needs for service; it does not mean looking for trouble. Keeping communication lines open, and being responsive to input from consumer groups, may be sufficient to surface information needed to upgrade service delivery. Encouraging staff to report service problems or user complaints, and to offer suggestions for improvement, also can aid the marketing effort.

Sometimes increased consumer satisfaction can be had simply by making it more evident what probation does. Visibility has long been a problem for probation. Most people know what they get for their tax dollar when they spend it on law enforcement —more cops on the beat, better response time, maybe less crime. What exactly does the probation dollar buy?

The chief in Fresno County believes that a department with something to offer should give serious thought to "labeling, pack-

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aging, and displaying" techniques. Probation personnel, he says, continue to talk about intake, investigation, and supervision, but these generalized concepts have little if any concrete meaning to key decision-makers or to citizens at large.

This manager would go so far as to rename probation ("a negative label, no longer descriptive of the many functions the department performs"). But he recommends beginning with an effort to develop a range of _discrete programs_ to replace generalized caseloads. Specific _programs with a single, understandable purpose_ or content (e.g., Juvenile Manpower, Domestic Violence Counseling, Community Daycare, Law Class), this chief has found, are more meaningful to staff and clients, more supportable by decision-makers, and more visible in the community.

As part of a multi-faceted campaign to communicate with varied networks and constituencies, any effort to make the contributions of probation more understandable is likely to increase consumer satisfaction and support. Some of the many ways probation departments are beginning to tell their story include:

> _Using the mass media_ --press releases on topics of special interest; radio and television appearances in a talk-show format; well-designed and informative brochures;

> _Presentations to community groups_ --soliciting and accepting invitations to speak before service clubs, business organizations, high-school or college classes, or any other group seeking public speakers;

> _Workshops and orientation programs_ --Fresno hosts one-day educational workshops for special community organizations such as the League of Women Voters or the chamber of commerce. One-day orientation programs (an inside look at the justice system) also are provided for small groups of community leaders.

> _Volunteers_ --many departments rely heavily on their volunteer programs to make citizens more aware of the problems and needs of the department and the justice system. A well run program can be a major communication device.

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Successful Support-Building: Some Tips

Building constituencies and networks calls on skills that public managers have not often had to exercise in years past. As budgets tighten most managers have to become a little more "political" and a little more "commercial" than some would like, not only for fiscal survival, but to share the burden and simplify the job. Weak or nonexistent linkages to the environment can make resource problems much worse.

The following are a few suggestions for working more effectively with the environment:

- Define the probation mission more broadly as a _community service_ rather than simply a correctional service. Seek funding and legitimacy in new areas justified by a more inclusive mission.

- Assemble information on cost-effectiveness and be prepared to sell probation in these terms. Fight wrong-minded judgments with even a little information on performance that is objective.

- Share the problem. Get input from as many sources as possible.

- Learn to prove what you claim or don't claim it.

- Present yourself as a knowledgeable manager, as being in command of your situation. Be a good politician, in the best sense of that term.

- Seek broad understanding of probation's goals and directions by suggesting alternate ways of conceiving the service. In laying out alternatives you (1) demonstrate leadership without being labeled (and thus losing a potential constituency); (2) find out where various political forces stand on the range of options presented; (3) learn from this how to construct compromises and build consensus around more acceptable options; and (4) find out who is committed and willing to help you fight your battles.

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- Don't drag interagency conflicts before the public eye. This doesn't mean hiding the truth, but some discretion is required if mutual trust is to be developed.

- Warn functional partners in advance if your agency is making plans that will affect their operations. Share information on problems and solicit advice and suggestions from others. Consider possible system effects whenever changes are planned.

- Multiply managerial actions by involving staff in the maintenance of functional ties. Encourage and reward interagency contacts, formal and informal, at all levels. Especially with middle managers, define linkage-building as part of the job.

- Find ways of protecting legitimate competition among functionally related agencies while maintaining the necessary integration of strategic and tactical planning.

- Join with functionally related organizations in public relations efforts. Ties to probation are strengthened as other agencies explain their relationships to the department.

- Control dependency on any one external source of support by maintaining alternatives. Cooperate with others whenever possible, but try to build your own base as an independent unit.

- Consider interjurisdictional as well as interagency coordinating structures to deal with "spillovers" (such as occur when one jurisdiction cuts services and a neighbor must take up the slack).

- Scan the horizon for changes that affect related organizations. If changes occur in their environments, try to anticipate and allow for the impact on your agency.

- Stress interagency efforts. Build activity at the boundary whenever possible rather than deep within the organization.

- Look at the world through the eyes of others. Remember that they also have organizational ties that constrain their actions, and accommodate these where possible. (E.g., a state-administered mental health agency and a county-administered probation agency will be especially vulnerable to being pulled apart). Identify things you have in common rather than getting into an adversarial position.

- Remember that, with the overflow from crowded prisons adding to an already heavy burden (and no new answers in sight), any probation department that does not reach out to inform and involve others may be courting real trouble. Probation can lead the effort to deal with offenders in the community, but it cannot do it alone.

VIII. KNOWLEDGE TRANSFER: CAN SUCCESS BE SHARED?

Underlying most research in corrections is the assumption that what is learned will be applied by others, that success can and will be shared. Research reports are prepared with knowledge transfer in mind. Especially in recent years, a major focus of correctional research has been the development and testing of technologies for practical application.

An entire industry has grown up around the notion of knowledge transfer, in corrections as in many other fields. Aid in applying knowledge generally involves outside experts in consultant roles and, not infrequently, some form of government sponsorship or support. Technical assistance, training, and dissemination of published information are some of the ways that knowledge is "diffused."

But how useful are traditional forms of assistance in helping probation managers to deal with fiscal problems? Is there anything about management in the public sector that makes it difficult for administrators to make use of this kind of assistance? What roles can outsiders (including other agencies of government) best play?

One goal of the study on which this monograph is based was to examine these kinds of questions. To this end the abundant literature on knowledge transfer was reviewed, management consultants were interviewed about their experiences, and an experimental technical assistance project was undertaken in Salem, Oregon. The Salem experience involved project staff, TA providers, and management and staff of the Marion County Community Corrections Department in a joint effort to study and learn from the technical assistance process.

Traditional Approaches to Knowledge Transfer

The model for knowledge transfer that has dominated the scene at least since the 1966 President's Crime Commission is based on several assumptions that no longer seem entirely sound. The process of change has been approached as if it were wholly rational, moving predictably and smoothly from problem definition through testing of alternatives to implementation of appropriate solutions. Innovations are supposed to be thoroughly tested in the social science "laboratory" before being sent out to users in the field.

Diffusion of promising innovations also has been premised on what Donald Schon calls the "center-periphery" model. Innovations are seen as originating with agency headquarters, or even with higher levels of government, and disseminated fully formed in a centrally-managed process of change. Adaptation to local needs or idiosyncrasies is viewed as a frequently necessary, but unfortunate, aspect of knowledge transfer on a broad scale.

The process of change in this model is seen as best facilitated by technical assistance "providers" in a consultant capacity. Normally these individuals come from outside the jurisdiction; sometimes they are academics, often they are former managers or practitioners no longer working in the field. The relationship between the outside consultant and the TA "recipient" generally has been seen as one-directional. As shown in the diagram below, information and expertise are believed to flow from the consultant to an essentially passive client.

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+----------------------+        +--------------------+
| Consultant-Provider  |        |   Manager-User     |
| (has knowledge)      |------->|  (needs knowledge) |
+----------------------+        +--------------------+
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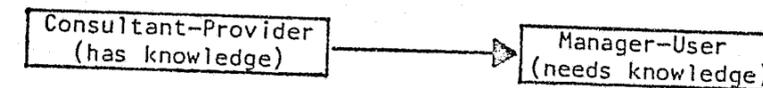
Finally, knowledge transfer traditionally has been seen as a technical process, not a political or social one. In moving existing knowledge from point A to point B, TA might run into political or other human barriers to implementation. But these have been seen as bothersome facts to overcome or circumvent, not as vital aspects of the process of knowledge creation.

Knowledge transfer, in brief, has been viewed as moving well-defined and proven technologies from a central repository out to their ultimate users in a distribution process controlled by experts. This model assumes that:

Knowledge exists.

Some people have it, or have direct access to it, while others need it.

It can be moved from one place to another, and from the social science laboratory to the practical world.

The main problem in applying knowledge is overcoming local resistance to change.

An Alternate Model

There is no universal approach to technical assistance or knowledge transfer in organizational and administrative areas, especially if the problem is defined as coping well with resource scarcity. So complex a task seldom lends itself to packaged interventions or easy answers.

There are, however, some guidelines for improving the technical assistance process. Certainly the rational model of change has its limitations when the goal is to help managers to make sensitive organizational adjustments within a highly charged political environment.

Some elements of a more workable model can be simply stated. Many people are coming to view knowledge transfer as much more of an internally generated and controlled process of organizational change. The roles of "provider" and "receiver" are blurred, as agency leadership and outside experts work collaboratively to tailor solutions in place. Also, neither party believes it must avoid "getting its hands dirty" in the political sphere within or outside the organization; some participation is accepted as a necessary part of the problem-solving process.

One promising model for organizational and administrative TA relies on the use of a mediator or broker —a third party with no vested interest in either the promotion of particular technologies or the distribution of power and resources at the organizational level. The TA broker connects agency managers with technical specialists as needed, but his focus is on helping the client organization to design its own plan for change. This plan will make optimal use of consultants (including other managers with relevant experience, academics, and technology vendors) as well as in-house talent. As suggested by the diagram below, the broker helps agency managers to guide the problem-solving process, but may not engage directly in "technology transfer."

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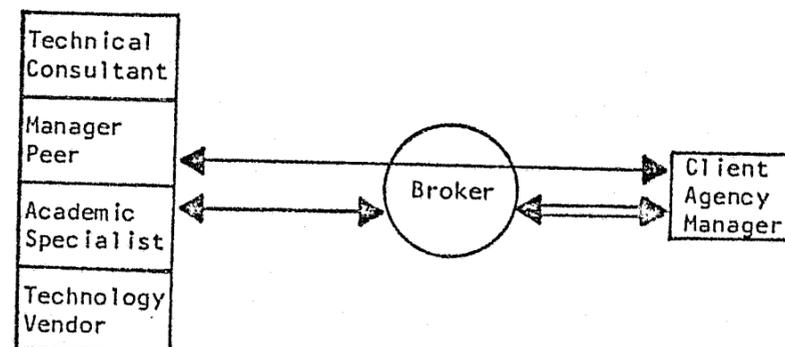
Another important element of a TA model that sees knowledge as created in place is the existence of a network of individuals and agencies working on common problems. Although every jurisdiction will solve its problems in its own way, it is wasteful in the extreme to ignore the experiences of others. Especially when resources are scarce, and mistakes costly to repair, it pays to keep in touch with developments elsewhere. Any mechanism that promotes exchange of information about new technologies and their implementation thus will be valuable in an era of limits.

Ideally, the TA broker also will serve as network facilitator, providing for constant updating of both the technology transferred and the information fed back to network members. Serving as coordinator and clearinghouse, the broker is in a position to field both information and consultant expertise.

Regardless of how the knowledge transfer process is organizationally conceived, certain assumptions are central to the non-traditional TA mode:

> Knowledge is always evolving, and it is created out of the elements of the situation in which it is used;

> The learning process involves both the consultant and the client;

> Organizational change is always political, and technology transfer is change;

> Problem-solving is an ongoing process of organizational learning in which solutions are re-cast over time.

TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE AS A POLITICAL PROCESS

Whether an innovation involves new technology or administrative reforms, it is very often human rather than technical factors that lead to implementation failure. Most TA models acknowledge the importance of social and political elements, but few take steps to deal with them.

Organizational and administrative change is almost always political, and it is especially so in a climate of fiscal scarcity. Changes designed to increase productivity or reallocate scarce resources tend to affect existing roles, relationships, interests, and rewards, bringing into question established turfs within and outside the organization just when such challenges are apt to be most threatening.

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Any attempt to induce change in this environment must engage the political process at critical points if it is to produce effective and lasting results. Problem definition, design of solutions, implementation, and ongoing adaptation all may involve various individuals and groups in a process of negotiation that is fundamentally political.

Technical assistance, if it is to promote effective change, cannot stay clear of the politics that govern the situation. Outsiders should try not to interfere unproductively in local matters, but they cannot avoid affecting by their presence the nature and outcomes of the negotiating process. That impact at least should be conscious and purposeful, and dedicated to aiding the organizational client.

The Process of Change

No model can accurately depict the change process, but it may be worth distinguishing the different stages that planned innovation generally goes through. Technical assistance seldom is necessary or even useful at every step, nor will the same individuals and groups participate equally intensely at each stage of the change process. The shifting cast of characters, and the evolutionary nature of the change effort, are good reasons that someone — preferably high-level organization management— should provide continuity by playing a leadership role.

The first stage of the change process is problem definition or diagnosis. This stage inevitably also involves early attempts to design or at least conceive solutions, since the way the problem is defined will tend to suggest certain ways it could be resolved. Problem definition is a highly political stage. Different actors likely will have quite different perspectives of the same facts, especially if their roles place them in different agencies, different systems, or different levels of government. The disparate experiences of management and line staff also may produce substantial disagreement about the nature and source of the problem.

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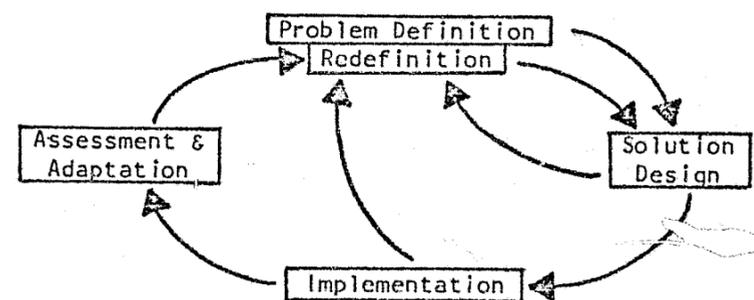
The second stage of the change process, rarely distinctly separated from the first, is solution design. Detailed design work may become quite technical if the problem lends itself to resolution through technology or dedicated systems. Experts may be called in and the research literature consulted. Users at the line level may be involved in evaluating the viability of proposed change.

At some point it may be necessary to redefine the problem, based on knowledge gained in solution design. This may reactivate the political process, as vested interests and intergroup tensions again are aroused. This time around, negotiations probably will be affected by what has gone before —positions may have hardened, support or opposition may have gained strength or lost interest, different actors may have come on the scene.

The third stage of the change effort is implementation. This stage too will overlap with others as the attempt to implement surfaces new problems and needs or requires adaptations in design. Implementation generally starts with a pilot or small-scale test of the innovation in one unit of the organization or system. By this point, technical assistance may be needed only intermittently, as a source of outside opinion, expertise, or evaluation. The range of actors involved in earlier stages may or may not participate at this one, depending on the scope and nature of the innovation.

The Key Participants

Not only are different actors key at different stages of the change process, but the mix of participants also will vary with the definition of the problem. Key actors will be those who, with respect to a given problem area, have both an interest in the outcome and sufficient power to significantly aid or impede the change process. These may include:

> organization management;
>
> line staff;
>
> oversight agencies (regulatory or higher in the chain of command);
>
> partners and competitors (agencies that work with or in the same functional area as the client organization);
>
> TA broker;
>
> technical consultants with special expertise.

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Clearly, the identity of key individuals and groups will vary with the way the problem is defined. In the Marion County TA pilot, for example, management of the local community corrections agency (the TA "client") initially defined the problem as one of redesigning the formula by which the state corrections department allocated funds to those counties participating in the Community Corrections Act. The county-administered organization proposed to lead a multi-county effort to lobby for change at the state level, using outside consultants at critical points to lend expertise and legitimacy.

This definition of the problem surfaced a very wide range of key participants. The state corrections department had a vital interest in the problem area and near-total authority to reject any proposals put forth. Their willingness to at least consider the products of this effort would largely determine its viability. Other key participants included the legislature and the state budget office, both of which were struggling to deal with shrinking resources in a state beset with severe economic problems.

At the county level, the board of commissioners and the administrative officer both had to be considered key. These political and executive officials serve as the community corrections director's "boss." They consistently express an active interest in this largely state-funded county department, and would expect to be involved by its management in any such plan for change.

Other counties also would need to be involved. Changing the state allocation formula inevitably would work to the advantage of some counties and the disadvantage of others. Much political groundwork would have to be done to amass sufficient local weight behind any proposal that might be developed, and opposition would have to be dealt with as well. Depending on how much publicity any change effort received, a wide array of variously powerful interest groups could be expected to demand a say both at the state level and in local communities.

Key Actors Change

This particular problem eventually was resolved by the state corrections department, which moved independently to alter its own allocation formula (such a plan had been in the works for some time). Another problem area was selected for attention, and this brought in a new cast of key participants.

The problem now was defined as speeding up the delivery of PSIs to the court. A circuit court judge recently had complained that presentence reports were taking longer to reach the court, and

that a backlog of referrals was developing. Although the problem had been resolved temporarily by assigning supervision staff to the presentence function, agency managers felt it wise to insure that it did not arise again. Increasing productivity in the PSI process also seemed likely to produce additional resources for other tasks.

This problem could be defined in several ways, but almost any definition would involve the judiciary as key actors. Although the community corrections department is responsible to the county executive, judges necessarily have much influence in such matters as the preparation of reports for the court.

Line staff, both PSI writers and supervising officers, also came on the scene when the issue of report production was raised. At the state level, classification officers in the corrections department expressed a lively interest in any proposal that might alter the information they had come to rely on for institutional assignment and programming. State corrections administrators also were concerned because budget shortages were forcing them to reduce their own classification efforts. They anticipated even greater need for information collected at the local level.

Most critical, as it turned out, was the state paroling authority, or members of that board who served on an oversight committee that must authorize any changes in format or content of PSIs produced for the courts.

Negotiating the Conditions for Change

Most organizational innovations are planned, designed, and implemented through a process of negotiation among key actors. The way these negotiations are approached and how they develop over time will largely determine what problems can be addressed, as well as the feasibility of any solutions proposed.

The Marion County effort to streamline the PSI shifted in focus over time as a result of negotiations between the community corrections agency and its organizational associates. Initial contacts to assess the possibilities for change found all key actors willing to cooperate. As talks proceeded, however, and as more people began to get involved, some individuals in critical oversight roles could be seen to draw back —apparently reluctant to go along with a process they felt was insufficiently responsive to them.

In discussions between agency managers and the various key actors, and later in a workshop attended by representatives of all groups, two major fronts for change were identified. The first was primarily internal to the community corrections agency —

those administrative processes through which reports are prepared. The second was heavily external —the delivery of reports to the court for use in sentencing; the impact of delivery time on jail populations; the use of PSI reports by state corrections officials for purposes that require additional information.

These two areas involved different actors in negotiations for change. Changes in the first area required the participation of agency staff and management only (with input from TA brokers and providers). Solutions could be implemented internally by the community corrections organization. Changes in the second area required the participation of either or both officials at the state level (state corrections, parole commission) and representatives of the local justice system (judges, district attorney, public defender, police). Certain problems would involve other counties as well (e.g., reducing duplication of effort where an offender has crossed county lines).

Initially it seemed that all of these areas were open to change. Over time, however, as negotiations progressed, and as alliances formed and dissolved around different understandings of the issues at stake, one front was lost —at least for the time being— and some resistance was encountered on another. For whatever reasons, the most promising field for change turned out to be the one that emerged as agency managers and line staff worked together to explore issues that concerned them both.

A decision thus was made to begin with changes that could be designed and implemented internally by the agency. On the foundation of improved internal practices might later be built a new effort to improve PSI processes involving others.

The Role of TA

What roles can outside TA providers or brokers play in such an essentially local political process? Can even well-meaning individuals from California, Connecticut, or Washington, D.C., be anything but intrusive in a change effort that so clearly belongs to Oregon?

The points at which TA may be useful will vary with the problem, with the skills of local key actors and their attitudes toward outside help, with the process that is adopted to involve and tap local people and ideas. Sometimes such roles as mediator, facilitator, legitimator, and technology specialist can be played effectively by individuals within the agency or in the immediate environment. It is important only to realize that these roles exist, and that outsiders may be found to fill them. Local managers of the change effort will decide.

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The following are a few of the roles that TA brokers and consultants can play in promoting a political resolution of organizational and management problems (this list does not include the obvious technical roles outsiders normally play):

> Initial probing of the "force field" or wide-ranging interviews to assess attitudes toward change and differing perceptions of the problem (see section below);

> Process facilitation —specialist in group work guiding the effort to identify and prioritize problems and potential solutions;

> Aid to manager in planning political strategy;

> A source of unbiased, or at least locally unvested, opinion where local conflict cannot be resolved;

> Legitimator —outside expert with technical or research background may help to build support for a proposed innovation;

> The "atta-boy" function -- where warranted, confirmation of an agency's or manager's good points by a knowledgeable outsider can be extremely helpful.

Neutrality can be a powerful weapon at certain junctures. A nonpartisan with broad experience and professional legitimacy can find many opportunities to aid the resolution of conflict and advance the process of change. Local managers must be careful how and when they make use of outsiders, and outsiders themselves must avoid being drawn into conflict on a personal level —thus gaining an investment in the outcome and losing the unique standing of a disinterested agent of change.

Political Strategy: Probing the Force Field

One effective strategy for engaging the political process from the start of the change effort is the "force field" analysis. This wide-ranging exploration of the politics of the situation may be undertaken by an outside TA broker or by an insider respected for his objectivity. The purposes of this strategy are to provide information needed for implementation analysis (Chapter II) and to begin to mobilize interest in and support for improvements in the problem area.

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Whether the force field analysis is done by a local person or by an outside consultant, this kind of probing must be handled with great care. Insensitivity to important personal, organizational, or political facts within and outside the agency can close more doors to change than are opened.

Force field analysis may begin with an effort to draw up a list of key individuals and agencies with which the probation organization must work or to whom it is accountable. The list of potential key actors initially may be quite comprehensive, especially if the problem has not yet been tightly circumscribed. In the Salem project, the list began with nominations by top management of individuals who "should be consulted" whenever signficant change is contemplated. To this list were added a number of individuals identified in interviews with others as having both interest and power in the change area.

Interviews, some conducted individually and others in small groups, are geared to produce information about how each person or group perceives the problem and the possibilities for change. The questions asked should be general and open-ended, avoiding at this stage too much discussion of the details of past conflicts. For example:

Is (X) a real problem?

How might the situation be improved?

Are there incentives and rewards for this kind of change?

Might it conflict with other initiatives in related areas?

Who might be expected to support (or oppose) such change? How effective could that support or opposition be?

What modifications in the suggested change might make it more acceptable?

Are there ways of meeting everyone's needs?

Who else should be consulted about change in this area?

In the course of these discussions it may become obvious who or what may be unexpectedly influential in the process of change. Interviewers should be alert for factors of personality and organizational position, for political dictates, for conflicts of interest in competing agendas existing or proposed. These facts

are not just "barriers" to change; they are part of the raw material out of which innovation —if any is to occur— must be fashioned.

Political Strategy: The Advisory or Planning Group

Force field analysis suggests what problems can be addressed, what range of solutions is possible, and who must be included in planning for change. The intergroup advisory or planning body can provide a forum for the design and implementation of politically acceptable change plans.

A nationwide demonstration program to promote improvements in the PSI process (described in Chapter V) required all sites to create a system-wide project advisory board. The effectiveness of these groups varied with their use (how often they met, how much say they had in plans for change, how differences of opinion were handled). But most sites found that the group forum elicited more responsible input, and provided for a productive level of confrontation and consensus building.

Connecticut formed one of the more successful interagency boards. The group worked together so well that it has been continued to deal with new developments as they arise. Membership includes the chief state's attorney, the commissioner of corrections, the chief public defender, a judge of the largest judicial district, one of the most prominent defense attorneys in the state, and several probation managers (including the state director, a chief probation officer, and the director of training).

These planning groups can be effective even if they are not formally organized, but convened only intermittently to brainstorm a problem area. In Marion County, the TA broker and the local community corrections agency jointly sponsored a working session involving all those with a stake in the PSI report and process —line staff and management, state and county interests, the justice system and agents of general government. The tangible product of this session was a written statement of the problem and a prioritized list of possible solutions, which served as a basis for future discussions.

In San Mateo County, California, where the goal was to shift some of probation's workload to the private sector (a potentially volatile plan), the political process was managed by an imaginative and effective criminal justice planning council. Staff of this local arm of the LEAA-funded planning hierarchy were sensitive enough to know when to push and when to draw back, when to bring key people together and when to simply let things move along at their own pace. Insisting that the proposed youth service bureaus be designed and installed by the neighborhoods

they served, council leadership worked hard to involve not only the official holders of authority in county government, but also the informal sources of influence and power in each local community. The political groundwork was laid in eighteen months. During this time, the council director said, "we covered this place with a blanket," making sure that everyone with a stake in the issue had agreed to buy in.

From Salem, Connecticut, and San Mateo, and from other experiences with planning groups and with problem definition through study of the force field, some keys to success seem to be:

- Active membership in the planning group must include those individuals who wield real power in the area in which change is being considered; if not, actual decisions will be made elsewhere, behind the scenes or in other settings.

- It may not be possible to include in the same working group individuals of unequal occupational or political status; for example, while probation managers may work productively with their own line staff, high-status individuals from elsewhere in the system may not. Separate working groups that interact at intervals are possible.

- Compromises may not produce lasting results. More effective may be efforts to redefine the problem in a way that allows all sides to "win." Out of the political realities that surface in the group may be forged a creative integration of conflicting interests.

- Those without a stake in the outcome, whether a private consulting entity or a publicly funded planning body or other agency, can serve useful mediating and facilitating roles in the planning process.

- Technical assistance providers or others involved in plan design should understand that proposals are likely to be rejected if they will reduce a manager's control over areas or elements for which he is held responsible. It may even be politically unwise for a manager to admit that he needs administrative TA.

TA AS A COLLABORATIVE PROCESS

In traditional models for technical assistance, the client agency manager presents the outside consultant with a problem and the consultant, after some study of the situation, presents the manager with a recommended approach to dealing with it. Those with a major stake in the problem area --organization members and their counterparts in the environment-- may not be involved until it comes time to implement the plan for change.

This approach may be workable when the problem is highly technical and limited in its impact on the social structure and political relationships of the organization. Training in the new procedure during implementation may be sufficient to embed it in agency operations. Retraining may suffice when future adjustments are required.

It is difficult, however, to imagine a situation in which an outsider might possess the insight necessary to define and resolve the resource problems of another agency or jurisdiction. Outsiders can play important roles, but only as part of a collaborative effort involving diverse perspectives and skills.

Problem-Solving as a Joint Venture

A common error made by both TA providers and those who seek their services is to assume that solving the client's problems is the responsibility of the outside "expert." That, after all, is what he is hired to do.

Prior to the pilot study in Salem, the Marion County Community Corrections Department had gone through an unsatisfying TA experience that followed this model. A team of academic consultants, highly regarded in their discipline, had been handed the task of studying a list of four problem areas and coming up with some recommendations for change. These consultants accepted the charge without question, returning in some months to the agency manager with a written report. The manager felt that the TA product was completely off-target and that the recommendations could not be implemented. "Why didn't they just tell me," he lamented, "that the job couldn't be done?"

It is this kind of experience that has turned many managers away from the use of outside experts at all. Vowing to rely instead on "our own" (whether locals only or including professional peers from other jurisdictions), these managers are turning inward to solve their problems as best they can.

In one sense this is a healthy development. In probation especially, such growing self-reliance may build confidence and

much-needed leadership in the field. Resisting the impulse to look outside the jurisdiction whenever a problem must be solved also should lead to more cost-effective use of local talent. When the needed expertise is right there in the organization or in agencies close by, it may not make sense to bring in someone with equivalent skills and no familiarity with the problem.

But self-reliance can become insularity if taken too far. Refusing to make use of knowledgeable academics or skilled outsiders from other professions can leave the probation organization and the field bereft of new sources of ideas and experience —talking to itself.

Ideally, the change process will draw as needed on the varied contributions of insiders and outsiders, peers in the probation field and in related disciplines, academics as well as practitioners. Responsibility for problem-solving, of course, should be relinquished totally to none of these participants. Top management may choose to delegate and share, but it must retain overall responsibility for and control over the change effort.

Collaborative Strategy: The TA Broker

At different points and for different purposes, the Salem pilot made use of public administration academics, manager peers, technical consultants (with specialities in the PSI process, classification and risk assessment, and jail overcrowding), and an organization development specialist skilled in group process. Top and middle managers and line staff of the community corrections agency played key problem-solving roles throughout the project period. Project staff (university-based academics with specializations in public administration and corrections) served as TA brokers, viewing their primary function as one of helping the organization to define and meet its needs for assistance.

The role of TA broker can be played effectively by any individual or entity with a broad understanding of the problem area, extensive contacts with technical consultants with relevant specialties, and nothing to gain from promoting particular systems or technologies. The TA broker must be in a position to help the client to objectively assess the full range of options available to deal with his organizational problems.

The TA broker should be open to making use of a wide variety of TA providers, recognizing that expertise is where you find it. Depending on the stage of the change process and the task at hand, the needed skills may be found in any or all of the following:

Line staff or employees of other agencies in the local jurisdiction (technical skills combined with knowledge of and legitimacy in the local setting may promote success in implementation);

Manager peers from other jurisdictions (other probation managers who have dealt successfully with similar problems are particularly effective, as demonstrated by the TA effort of the National Institute of Corrections in the classification area);

Technology vendors (individuals skilled in designing and implementing particular kinds of systems or solving particular types of problems may be most cost-effective once a solution or approach has been selected);

Academic specialists or generalists (at times a specialist in public finance or budgeting, human resource management, planning, or organization change may bring new insights to an ingrown problem area).

The job of the TA broker is to help the client organization put together an effective combination of talents, bringing in different types of skills as they are needed and with as little waste as possible. (A specialist brought in to perform a particular task, for example, need not be retained on site at times when the job is more cost-effectively done by others.) The broker also negotiates with the various sources of expertise, serving as a buffer between agency management and outside consultants or other project staff.

Information as well as skills will be brought to bear on the problem; and it is the job of the TA broker to keep up on developments in the problem area. Information should be communicated with as little "filtering" as possible, allowing agency managers to make up their own minds about the relative value of different options. Brokers will have opinions, of course, but they will be most useful to the client organization if they refrain from "pushing" any given approach.

Agency managers can play the broker role themselves, or assign these tasks to a trusted employee. The manager-broker, however, will need to have or develop an unusually broad awareness of opportunities nationwide and a range of contacts that extends

beyond his own field. He can be helped to achieve the first of these through a well maintained network of professional peers.

Collaborative Strategy: The Peer Network

The Salem pilot at various points made use of a nationwide peer network that had been created to serve other study purposes. A small group of innovative probation managers in contact with staff serving as TA brokers on several occasions made important inputs to the Marion County effort. The flow of current information from the field also kept project staff generally in touch with developments nationwide in the focal areas of jail overcrowding, classification for risk, and the PSI.

The National Institute of Corrections, in promoting its model system for classification and differential case management, makes extensive use of the peer network. Managers trained by the NIC to upgrade their case classification systems subsequently are called on to serve as technical consultants in other jurisdictions. This strategy makes cost-effective use of available federal funds through the gradual building of competence and expertise with which the field can begin to help itself.

These two approaches —one pulling in existing expertise in the manner of a clearinghouse, the other moving it from the center outward— are among many possibilities for sharing success through the creation and maintenance of a peer network.

Network facilitators need not be involved in the technical assistance business. Professional associations, management organizations, and even loose affiliations of probation executives who meet occasionally at conferences can perform the functions of communication and exchange necessary to keep a network alive. The key, however, is to create stable, long-term relationships that provide a source of mutual support for innovation and problem-solving. Erratic or one-time contacts may be stimulating, but their effects are soon dissipated in daily routine.

There are numerous ways of keeping network members in touch. A regularly distributed newsletter or other printed medium of communication is one possibility.

Face-to-face interactions are especially rewarding, if somewhat costly. One promising approach is the knowledge-transfer (or research-utilization) symposium, modeled on the mission-oriented conference sometimes used by industry to promote system-wide innovation. These conferences have been used to create and staff an industry network, to disseminate new findings and encourage their application, and to lay a basis for future efforts to get information into action.

Collaborative Strategy: The Theory-Practice Dialogue

The two-year project underlying this monograph brought theoreticians and practitioners together in four separate workshops over the project period, the last one as part of the Salem TA pilot. As a mechanism for knowledge transfer (or exchange), this strategy seemed particularly effective.

These workshops were designed to expose different perspectives to one another, not to come to consensus but to add a dimension to each. Participants were carefully selected, and agendas for the day-long conferences were tightly orchestrated. These were high-energy sessions. Space was provided for open discussion and spontaneous interaction, but everyone in attendance had a part to play, and this required a certain rigor in procedure.

The rift between the "ivory tower" researcher, academic, or theoretician and the practitioner who must deal daily with "real life" problems is legendary. The two camps are said to be unable to talk to one another. The theoretician sees the working manager as impatient for answers, opportunistic in responding to external pressures, simplistic in perspective on the world. The practitioner sees the academic as unnecessarily tentative in coming to conclusions, often unintelligible, and generally out of touch.

The differences between these two groups are not simply the product of prejudice and unfamiliarity. Academics and practitioners are judged by different standards and respond to different systems of incentives and rewards. The time-frames they work within are apt to be different, as are their values and priorities. What meets the needs of one group may negatively impact the other.

Yet when the two perspectives are brought together on an equal footing --each serving as both provider and receiver of knowledge and expertise-- the experience for all can be rich indeed. In each of the four workshops held during this project both sides came away impressed with the contributions of the other. Public administration academics learned how executives in one segment of the public sector were responding to fiscal and other changes they knew to be affecting governments at all levels and in most jurisdictions. Probation managers and other justice system representatives picked up new ways of thinking about their roles and relationships, saw themselves in the broader context of government generally, and took back with them some conceptual tools for dealing with their organizational problems.

In the case of the Salem pilot, the formal workshop was held near the end of the project period, the idea being that a summing up

and sharing of experiences would be useful at that point. On the agenda with the Marion County managers were several TA specialists and a couple of professors of public administration.

One of the latter went on at some length about the notion of "institution building" (see Chapter III) and the ways that management decisions (including those that affect TA) can be simplified if organizational values, goals, and "character" are clear. There was a long silence at the end of this presentation, followed by a burst of questions.

Subsequent discussions of such practical matters as the directions that future change efforts would take (the TA focus had expanded over time to include control of jail populations) made it obvious that the "real-world" technicians and managers had been affected. "Technical assistance should start," one manager observed, "with just such an effort to get us all talking the same language."

TA AS ORGANIZATIONAL LEARNING

In a book called Beyond the Stable State, Donald Schon describes the constant high level of uncertainty and change characteristic of modern life as a loss of belief in stability itself, a loss of the stable state.

In an environment where change is so rapid that one seems never to attain a state of rest, organization managers may feel that they are running at top speed just to stay in the same place. The idea of deliberately introducing change into such a setting may be viewed with some alarm.

What should probation managers understand about the current state of instability and change? First, it is not an isolated phenomenon, affecting only the beleaguered field of probation. "Currents of change," writes Schon, "roll through every domain of society . . . No established institution in our society now perceives itself as adequate to the challenges that face it." In some ways, he says, the very success of an organization in earlier times (e.g., the labor movement) makes it especially inadequate today.

Second, it is not just technical adaptations that are required. Missions are being questioned. Values sometimes are turned inside out. Organizations (universities, the church, social welfare agencies) are pressured to take on roles that conflict with long-held ideals and self-images. Clients, consumers, and employee groups push for redistribution of power or for new services to meet new needs.

Third, the pace of change apparently is not likely soon to lessen. Loss of the stable state means that society and all of its institutions are in continuing processes of transformation. We cannot, says Schon, expect new stable states that will endure even for our own lifetimes.

We need, then, to confront the phenomenon directly and constructively. But how? According to Schon, we must learn to understand, guide, and manage these transformations. We must become able not only to fit changing situations; we must create institutions capable of bringing about their own continuing transformation. He calls these "learning systems."

Probation as a Learning System

As an organization and as a field, probation can become a learning system. In its approach to problem-solving, the probation organization can open up to discoveries at the periphery, picking up themes for central policy from what is learned at operating levels. The field too can be helped to move forward, not by efforts to promote conformity in mission or methods, but by maximizing support for innovation combined with evaluation conducive to learning.

A learning system is one that:

- seeks ideas and information from all levels and all units in the organization or field;

- sets no limits on the issues that may be raised or the areas that are open to investigation;

- sees the process of experimentation and invention as ongoing, and policies deriving from them as responsive to what is learned;

- evaluates policies as well as their implementation;

- helps units to transform themselves and connects them to each other in learning networks;

- promotes appropriate diversity, independence, and free thought;

- avoids the pretense of permanent solutions;

- avoids heavy investment in exclusive concepts or systems that shut out competition and inhibit adaptation;

- allows the product of any change effort to emerge from the process of change;

- recognizes that situational factors (personal, social, organizational, political, physical) are among the valid criteria for selecting a "good" solution or approach.

In short, a learning system is an organization or group of related organizations that taps all sources of local intelligence in an ongoing effort to transform itself. Instead of pushing centrally formulated policy out to operating levels in a futile attempt to force certain kinds of change, the learning organization or system sees its task as setting in motion and guiding a network of related local efforts to learn and grow.

The Role of Helpful Outsiders

Where do technical assistance providers fit into the learning system? If local agencies are the source of new ideas, what roles can state or federal governments play? (Similarly, how can headquarters in a multi-office organization best aid the learning process?)

In a learning system it is presumed that there is no general model for innovation or transformation. Each unit is characterized by its own conditions and problems, and the process of change is open-ended. The goal is to deal constructively with emerging issues, whatever they may turn out to be.

The role of non-locals (outsiders, representatives of higher levels, or even "the boss") necessarily shifts. Schon explains:

> "The fostering of [change] cannot take the form of pre-defining policy and causing it to fan out from a center. Central may provide first instances or policy themes which are take-off points for chains of transformation in localities. It may help local agencies to learn from one another's experience. It may even lend its weight to shifts in power structure which seem likely to lead to social discovery at the local level."

But it does not dictate. In a learning system, says Schon, every alleged example of "implementation" of a program or policy actually is a process of local discovery.

The role of TA in this at times is limited to what one consultant describes as "holding hands" --assuring the client that what they are going through is not atypical and that others have survived the experience. Instead of trying to "train" local personnel to do things the way they "ought" to be done, helpful outsiders will play roles that are primarily facilitative --providing information, connecting the client with technical and other resources, pointing out potential pitfalls and raising questions that may lead to further learning.

As Schon points out, where government functions are concerned, there are some difficulties with the model of a locally independent learning system. In limiting the regulatory functions of central government (or headquarters, or even the informal influence of the field) such a model raises questions of equity --for employees as well as for the agency's clients. What happens to system-wide standards if everyone is doing their own thing?

This issue needs to be dealt with, as the probation field seems well aware. It is important only to add to the equation the following fact. In areas where organizational learning is required --in those non-routine areas where uncertainty is high, knowledge building is maximized if those located at the point of action are encouraged to experiment and evaluate, in the process helping us all to learn.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

New possibilities for adapting to technological and social change are suggested in Donald A. Schon's excellent book, Beyond the Stable State (New York, Norton, 1973).

An experimental publication sponsored by NIMH and published by the Human Interaction Research Institute in Los Angeles explores ways to improve organizational consulting practices. Titled Consultation, its first issue came out in Fall 1981.

At least two writers have reported that administrators and academics express similar opinions and views of the world, suggesting a basis for collaboration in knowledge transfer. See James S. Bowman, "Managerial Theory and Practice: A Transfer of Knowledge in Public Administration," Public Administration Review, 38(Nov/Dec) 1978, pp. 563-570; and W. Jack Duncan, "Knowledge Transfer in Administrative Science," Public Administration Review, 40(July/Aug) 1980, p. 34.

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