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**In Memoriam**  
National Police Week

# A Japanese Management Technique Applied to Local Policing

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One of the hottest topics in the management field is the techniques used in Japan, and one of the primary components in that system of management is the concern for quality control. Related to this issue of quality control is the concept known as the "quality control circle." Considering the apparent success of Japanese management techniques and the high

reputation for quality that their products have, one has to wonder what impact the quality control circle might have upon American law enforcement.

Before examining an application of the quality control circle within an American law enforcement agency, let's briefly examine what this concept is and how it operates. The quality

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control circle is composed of a supervisor and a group of people working together on the same project or a related series of tasks. This group meets on a regular basis to discuss various questions, including:

- 1) Can the job be done more quickly with another approach?
- 2) Are all the particular steps involved in performing the task necessary?
- 3) Can some performance steps be eliminated, thereby making job performance more efficient?

The basic premise underlying the concept of the quality control circle is that the people actually doing the work know best how the work should be done and what needs to be done to improve the quality of work. By allowing the employees to actually have a say in how their jobs are performed, they are provided with an incentive to see that the work is accomplished in the most efficient manner. The incentive lies in the fact that no one likes to fail, and when it comes to *our* ideals, we especially do not want to fail. An employee's motivation is heightened when his suggestion for improvement is accepted, implemented, and through his efforts, produces the desired result.

Within the private industrial setting, it is quite common for employees to receive monetary rewards for their successfully implemented suggestions. This is possible because it is easy to define and measure the output of their efforts in the product they produce. However, within the public sector, this type of reward system and measurement is usually not possible. This is especially true within law enforcement since the primary product of a law enforcement agency is the service it provides to the community. Nonetheless, a close examination of the tasks performed by police officers reveals several that might be profitably subjected to the quality control circle concept.

Recently, within the Champaign, IL, Police Department, the chief of police decided to reorganize the various patrol shifts in order to provide for a common training day each week. When this occurred, several supervisors on one of the shifts decided to use one of the monthly training days to see if the quality control circle concept could be successfully applied.

#### Initial Steps

The first step in instituting the concept was for the shift commander and his two immediate subordinate supervisors to meet to divide the shift into two equal groups. By doing so, it was possible for one of the groups to engage in training during the first half of the shift and then reverse roles with the second during the last half of the shift. It was also decided during this initial meeting that 1 hour of the 4 hours allotted for training would be devoted to the quality control circle. Recognizing that the concept had never been tried before, this time allocation was left open to future modifications.

Next, the shift commander and the supervisors focused on possible topics for discussion during the first meeting of the quality control circle. It was believed that the questions would have to be worded in a manner that would promote discussion, and they would have to relate to tasks the officers were performing that held the potential for improvement. As a result of this discussion, the following questions were only some of those developed:

- 1) In general, what are some of the problems facing the shift and what are some possible solutions to them?



Lieutenant Carter



Lieutenant Gragey

- 2) Are there departmental forms or procedures in need of change, especially those that have a direct impact upon the shift?
- 3) Are there any cost savings that might be explored, such as the need to continually jump weak car batteries in cold weather, etc.?
- 4) How can we effectively approach DUI and the illegal transportation of alcohol?
- 5) How can we approach the problem of prostitution downtown?
- 6) When considering productivity, what self-initiated categories lend themselves to the establishment of a minimum standard, and what are some "ball park" figures on these standard expectations?
- 7) Can cooperative party details be formed?
- 8) What can be done about "afterhours" establishments?
- 9) How can we improve radio procedure?
- 10) What can be done about problem bar areas?

One very important point remained to be discussed before the attempted implementation of the concept. It was stressed that the supervisor should act *only* as the moderator or facilitator of the discussion. Supervisors were cautioned to expect that the discussion during the first session could wander. They should attempt to see that the discussion focused on positive issues, i.e., topics about which the group could do something. Also, it was to be expected that some previously unexpressed grievances might arise—a necessary prerequisite for a constructive discussion.

#### Implementation of the Quality Control Circle

The implementation of the program began with the supervisors casually mentioning the concept to officers during informal discussions. Once this had been accomplished, the stage was set for the first meeting.

During the initial meeting with the first group of officers, the shift commander attempted to explain the basic concept and to monitor the discussion in order to provide continuity between the two groups. The first group chose to spend the greatest portion of the session discussing the relative merits of a shift rotation policy that had recently been introduced. The emergence of this discussion topic was not really a surprise since it had been a topic of informal discussion between officers since shortly after its introduction. While the group did not focus upon specific problem solving, the discussion was nonetheless beneficial in clearing up misunderstandings about the policy.

During the meeting of the second group, some initial resistance in the form of nonparticipation was experienced. The supervisor was able to begin the discussion by asking for input concerning how the booking-in process might be accelerated. After giving the officers a few minutes to reflect on the issue, suggestions were sought. What followed was a lively discussion during which several valid modifications were suggested. Once the discussion began, the supervisor had to interrupt only a few times and then only for the purpose of getting the discussion back on track.



Donald G. Hanna  
Chief of Police

After an hour of discussion, a short break was announced and the officers' involvement in the process was evidenced by the fact that few of the officers took advantage of the break opportunity. During the break, the supervisors agreed to extend the period beyond the originally allocated 1 hour. During the second hour, the supervisor restated what had been discussed and agreed upon the first hour and then opened up the discussion for additional problem solving. What happened during this stage was negotiation among the officers. One officer would state his ideas which would be discussed by the group until a mutually agreed upon step in the booking process was reached. This continued until the entire booking procedure had been discussed and a new procedure established. The previous booking procedure steps included:

- 1) The arresting officer transported the prisoner to the station and into the prisoner bay area.
- 2) The officer closed the bay door, making escape impossible, and while the prisoner was still handcuffed and sitting inside the patrol car, the officer locked up his weapon.
- 3) The prisoner was removed from the car and searched again.
- 4) The officer then contacted receiving personnel, via intercom, and was allowed entry into the booking area with the prisoner.
- 5) The officer then removed the prisoner's handcuffs, inventoried his property, and locked him in a cell. (In some instances it was necessary to check two to three cells to find an empty one).

The new booking procedure steps included:

- 1) While the officer is enroute to the station, he radios for a warrant check through the computer, using the name, sex, and date of birth of the prisoner. The desk personnel then check with records to see if there is any criminal history, a previous record, active warrants, or if an update is needed on the jacket. This information, along with printouts the arresting officer would need from the computer, are taken to the booking area for the arresting officer when he arrives.
- 2) When the officer brings the prisoner into the booking room, after securing the bay door and his weapon, he again searches the prisoner, and desk personnel assign the prisoner to a cell via the intercom.
- 3) The prisoner's property is removed and inventoried, a handwritten arrest card is completed by the arresting officer, and the prisoner is locked up in the assigned cell.
- 4) The arresting officer gives the handwritten arrest forms to the desk personnel to be typed and returns to patrol.
- 5) Desk personnel type the information at a convenient time during the shift.
- 6) The officer returns later to review the arrest packet and adds the report and sworn complaint.

**"Production and innovative ideas seem to come out of [quality control sessions] in satisfying regularity."**

**Results**

After meeting in the quality control circle with two groups of officers, several observations were made, including:

- 1) The initial allocation of 1 hour for the process was clearly insufficient. At least 2 hours of discussion would be needed.
- 2) The officers were able to conduct open and frank discussions, even to the point of discussing personal problems.
- 3) One officer commented on the positive value of a forum of this type, during which one was allowed to make his personal needs and concerns known to others for an attempt at resolution.

Shortly after the meetings, some officers expressed the opinion that this new procedure was a good idea but it would not be productive. They believed that the quality control circle was an exercise in futility. This, however, was not to be the case. The new booking procedure developed by the officers was implemented during the very next duty day for the shift, an action which served to reinforce in the officers' minds that their supervisors were committed to the concept of the quality control circle and the implementation of constructive officer input whenever possible.

In a more pragmatic vein, how did the new booking procedure work? Before the new procedure was developed, officers averaged 30- to 45-minutes-per-prisoner to book them and complete the required paperwork.

This was primarily because officers had to lock up the prisoner and then leave the booking room to retrieve needed information from elsewhere in the building. On occasion, it was necessary to do this three to four times for each prisoner.

After the new procedure was implemented, officers averaged 15- to 20-minutes-per-prisoner to complete the required tasks. This was a savings of 25- to 30-minutes-per-prisoner—time which could be better spent in proactive patrol operations. Even now, as the officers follow the new procedure, they continue to evaluate it and look for additional ways to streamline the process.

**Conclusion**

While the quality control circle is still in its early stages in our department, the results are nonetheless encouraging. Productive and innovative ideas seem to come out of the sessions in satisfying regularity. Reinforcement in terms of officer's feelings of involvement in the decision-making process are also being positively expressed.

The positive effects notwithstanding, caution should be exercised concerning a couple of points. First, the institution of quality control circles without the commitment of the involved employees is doomed to failure. Starting a new "management fad" with the expectation that its mere presence will bring positive results without commitment to the principles upon which it is based is a serious mistake. It will not work and can weaken management's credibility for future innovative programs. It is very frustrating to employees to be constantly introduced to new projects which are begun with enthusiasm and quietly discarded the following week.

Second, it should be stressed that people who act as moderators/facilitators for the quality control circles must be both articulate and patient. They will likely be called upon to justify every policy and procedure that ever existed and probably some that never did. The moderator/facilitator must be able to field the ridiculous and return to the rational, as well as guide the discussion without appearing to stifle the free exchange of ideas. They must have confidence in themselves and their abilities. If someone has a doubt about their ability to communicate on an equal basis with a group of officers—communication occasionally charged with emotion—the moderator/facilitator position is not for them.

If you are a manager or supervisor ready to meet the challenge of tapping the grassroots ability and creative potential of your department, the quality control circle is a concept for you. It is a tool for the development of productivity and efficiency which can result in the enhancement of your department, and most importantly, its personnel.

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For further information concerning the application of the quality control concept within the law enforcement environment, please contact the authors:

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