

LEADERSHIP

in Police Organizations

International Association of Chiefs of Police

In the last edition of the Leadership in Police Organizations Training Bulletin, we discussed the importance of dispersed leadership as the catalyst for change and leader development in police organizations as well as for improved service to the community. We described how a comprehensive leader training course, such as the IACP Leadership in Police Organizations course, should follow the essentials of dispersed leadership, as depicted in figure 1, in order to reap the maximum benefit from a single course of instruction.

- Shared understanding of what leadership means
- Commitment to shared goals and values
- Leaders at all levels of the organization
- Leaders leading differently at different organizational levels
- A way to develop leadership knowledge and skills throughout the organization
- A way to determine where you are as an organization and as individual leaders

Figure 1. *The Essentials of Dispersed Leadership*

In the first training bulletin, we also explained that while leader training is a critical component of dispersed leadership, it must be considered within a larger framework of leader development if an organization is to build and perpetuate a legacy of good leadership and organizational effectiveness. This larger leader development framework is the topic of this training bulletin.

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Training Bulletin 2

A Leadership Development System

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Global Leadership in Policing



It is paramount to understand that there is no silver bullet or vaccination for leadership. All leaders are developed; they are not born. While a natural leader might emerge by being at the right place at the right time, this type of leader is still the product of learned professional values, formal or informal leadership training, and the accumulation of job experience over time. For police officers, like any other people working in organizations, exposure to values, training, and job experience over the entire length of their career is the foundation for leadership development. In turn, the creation of a leadership development system perpetuates the mission, values, and goals of a police agency or any other organization. How then does one purposefully and thoughtfully cause this to happen in one's department?

The quick answer is captured in the simplicity of the U.S. Army's "Be, Know, Do" framework for leader development. This approach recognizes that there are requisite values, knowledge, and experience for developing leaders. Stated another way, leadership programs must develop the character, technical skills, and leadership knowledge, as well as provide the opportunity to express this knowledge in ethically sound leadership behaviors. Figure 2 captures this process; it will serve as a framework for the remainder of this article.



Figure 2. The Leadership Development System

As figure 2 depicts, a profession's values and ethics are the foundation for the leader development process. While this may seem obvious, what may not be so transparent is the role that these two critical components play over the course of an entire career. Virtually everyone would agree that explicit, formal values and ethics training is appropriate in training academies for new officers. But it is just as important to repeat this

training in different formats periodically throughout an officer's career, especially any time the officer changes jobs. But one might say, "Why? We hire people with the right values. Why repeat this training?" Regardless of one's training and internalized values, an officer is continually challenged while on the job. Unfortunately, sometimes the challenge is from one's peers, supervisors, or even the system in which an officer works. Additionally, some of the realities of police work can also weaken or even fracture a previously good character. Periodic training keeps the organization's values and ethics in the forefront of everyone's daily activities. Ethics training is particularly important whenever an officer changes jobs, as the agency's values and ethics often appear differently in different jobs. When an officer is trained using real-world examples from his or her new job, the concepts come to life and clearly illustrate what ethical behavior looks like in the context of one's new work. What might be crystal clear guidance to a patrol officer may not transfer when this officer is promoted and becomes the agency's public affairs officer or human relations director.



The next fundamental component of a leadership development program is the identification of leadership competency areas. These are the specific leadership skills or behaviors that are required by leaders at each level in a department to perform their jobs. In the first training bulletin, we explained that leaders at different levels of an organization do different things and hence require different leadership skills to be successful. Therefore, identifying the necessary leadership skills for each level in the department, beginning with the patrol officer who "leads" citizens in the community and ending with the chief, who leads everyone in the department and represents the department to the community, focuses the leadership development effort by listing specific position-based required skills. There are many good reasons for this process.

With many fine training programs available to a department, but limited training time and funds, it only makes sense to decide what skills are needed at each level of an agency before randomly sending people to training in hopes that they will learn what the department needs. Next, when required competen-

cies are known in advance, the assessment process for promotions to that level becomes an evaluation of the requisite skills for the vacancy rather than selecting whoever scores best on a standard exam that may or

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may not reflect the skill set needed to perform well in the new position. Further, a leadership competency list provides a rational process for assignment rotation. When the required skills for a specific position are known, linking certain jobs together into a career path becomes easier and more logical. And finally, if your employees understand what is required of them to qualify for positions and jobs they want, they can direct their studies and career planning to achieve their own professional goals.

The last component of the foundation of a leadership development program is expectations and standards. Put simply, these are what leaders at each level of the department are supposed to do. Expectations and standards are set and maintained by leaders at every level of the organization for other leaders at lower levels in the department. As with leadership competency areas, expectations and standards provide an approach for employees to learn what to do in a current job as well as a framework for learning important leadership lessons in each step of their career. Employees learn through the feedback they receive from their actions. If job expectations and standards are not defined and available, or they are not clear, there can be no meaningful or consistent way to compare work behavior to job requirements. Without clear expectations and standards, one cannot determine how they are performing and work meaningfully to develop as a leader.

How does someone develop the foundation for a leadership development program? An example of the basic, widely recognized values and ethics of the police profession is the IACP Ethics Toolkit, available at www.theiacp.org/profassist/ethics/index.htm. However, the identification of leadership competency areas and expectations and standards must be created by each agency. By developing these three areas—values

and ethics, leadership competency areas, and expectations and standards—a department does two things. First, it provides an overview of what each police officer who aspires to lead must “Be, Know, and Do” to grow as a leader in that organization. Second, it provides a solid foundation for the three core activities of a leader development program that are depicted as the pillars in figure 2.

The first core activity is **institutional education and training**. Keeping in mind the goals set forth in the foundation of an agency’s leadership development program and the essentials of dispersed leadership, an agency’s leadership can select the training and the timing that is most appropriate for the leadership competencies at each level of the agency. This pillar is where formal training, such as the IACP Leadership in Police Organizations course, fits into the overarching framework of leader development. When everyone in an organization gets the same leadership training at uniform points in their career, they gain both a common understanding of leadership, which facilitates the communication of leadership issues, and a common framework to understand, analyze, and learn from leadership experiences in the other two pillars of the model.

The second and most important leader development core activity is **operational assignments**. While depicted as a separate area, leader development from operational assignments becomes significantly more effective when coupled with an officer’s institutional education and training. Complex behavior such as leadership is learned by putting the knowledge gained from formal training and the lessons learned by observing other leaders into practice and allowing the lessons learned to guide future leader behavior. In a symbiotic manner, having a good classroom or theoretical understanding of leadership and a mental framework with which to analyze leadership situations on the job makes it both easier to lead and easier to learn from daily experiences. These skills and experiences also help the developing leader to identify their own individual training needs, focusing the third pillar of leader development—self-development.

As the name implies, **self-development** is what a developing leader does on his or her own to correct shortcomings and reinforce strengths. These can be any number of learning projects such as college courses, technical training, reading, or a similar learning task performed either during personal time or at work and designed to make a developing leader

more efficient and effective. As there are an abundance of potential projects that compete for a developing leader's time, it is very important to focus the developing leader on what is most important for his or her personal development. This is accomplished by clearly articulated values, ethics, leader competencies, standards, and expectations in conjunction with a standardized education and training plan and progressively more challenging operational assignments that put the developing leader's individual learning needs into context.

The effective and thoughtful implementation of these principles will create a network of reinforcing leadership development processes producing solid leaders at all levels of any agency. Given flexibility and persistence to achieve the optimum leader development program for an agency, the chief's day-to-day life might look something like this:

In the first five years you have been the chief of police, you have seen lots of change in your community. The city government has turned over to some extent and the tax base and economy have dramatically changed, as have the demands presented to you by your citizens. You have welcomed these challenges and have kept pace with your changing community.

By spending time developing your officers to lead and work together as a team, instead of looking for ways to avoid change and challenges, you have been able to effectively and efficiently accomplish your job. In addition to creating responsible, informed leaders throughout your department, the time you spent developing them also helped clarify the department's standards and expectations. Over time, this combination greatly reduced the inconsistent application of rewards, punishments, and promotions, thereby boosting motivation, satisfaction, and performance throughout the department. Furthermore, when budget cuts came, and staff reduction occurred, it was easier to select the right folks to let go without hurting morale. When the inevitable problems did occur, leaders at all levels of the department stepped up and quietly solved the issues in accordance with the department's mission, vision, goals, and values at the lowest levels. Issues did not fester until they came to your attention and became problems that consumed huge amounts of your time.

Effective leadership ensured processes flowed smoothly inside the department, officer morale soared, and your department's image and effectiveness stayed high in the community. When asked by the media about why your department worked so well, you honestly stated that it is because you had great systems and, most importantly, you had been able to develop dedicated leaders throughout your entire department.

Does your department have the potential to replicate this scenario? You bet it does, if you develop the leadership potential in your agency.

With support from the U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Community Oriented Policing Services, the IACP is in its third year of developing the Leadership In Police Organizations leadership development model. So far, the IACP has completed two demonstration courses and one train-the-trainer course. The key to success of this model lies with the trainers we have trained and those yet to be trained, because it is mostly through building an internal capacity, that departments will be able to sustain future leadership training.

ABOUT THE AUTHORS:

Dr. Howard T. Prince II has been involved in leadership development programs for almost 30 years and is director of the Center for Ethical Leadership at the Lyndon B. Johnson School of the University of Texas in Austin. Dr. Prince assumed this position after 28 years of military service that included commanding troops in combat and leading the U.S. Military Academy's Department of Behavioral Science and Leadership. Dr. Prince also was the founding dean of the Jepson School of Leadership at the University of Richmond, the only undergraduate leadership program in the country. He has been active in police leadership training for more than seven years.

Chief Larry Hesser is the former chief of police of communities in Georgia, Colorado, North Carolina, and Texas as well as the former president of the North Carolina Association of Chiefs of Police. Chief Hesser, working with Dr. Prince, successfully used the Leadership in Police Organizations training course in Georgetown, Texas, and successfully championed the course nationwide through the IACP.

Mr. John Halstead is a retired U.S. Army officer who commanded soldiers at several levels and was an associate professor and the director of the U.S. Military Academy's military leadership course. He brings more than 30 years of education and training experience to the Leadership in Police Organizations course.