

The Power of Leadership

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Abstract

As the world continues on into the twenty first century, organizations in both the public and private sector are struggling with human resource issues as never before. Recruiting, retention and productivity of employees remains a cornerstone of any organizations success. However, the ability to adapt and change to meet this ever-changing workforce has become a struggle for many managers. Traditional methods of management and supervision are unable to produce the work environment required to not only hire and keep employees, but to enable them to become an integral part in achieving agency goals and objectives. Quality leadership programs encompassing both vertical and horizontal concepts may be the key to survival and success in this new arena. In addition to the literature review presented in this paper, a five-question survey was submitted to 48 upper and mid-level law enforcement managers representing state and local agencies, sheriff's and police departments. The goal was to examine any correlation between strong leadership practices and what relation, if any, they had on an organization.

Introduction

For law enforcement agencies around the State of Florida the present crisis is reaching a crescendo. Unable to recruit new employees to replace those lost and unable to keep employees they now have, the problem of staffing at all levels has become acute. While the problems associated with high employee turnover did not materialize overnight, it has been on a steady approach over the last few years that is now recognized as a critical issue for many agencies and organizations. What once was a trickle has now become a river. A few years ago many law enforcement agencies were able to purview a long list of highly qualified applicants when it came time to replace retiring employees. Turnover was low and many people spent an entire career with the same agency. Work experience was easily passed from old to new and retained within the organization. An inability to recruit qualified personnel and the failure to retain capable employees will equate to high cost in training, a loss of core experience, low morale among current employees and a loss of efficiency in obtaining agency goals and objectives.

This even flow of personnel, experience and information into an organization has been disrupted by a number of factors. One of which is simple mathematics... there are fewer people available in the work force. As noted by Zemke, Raines and Filipczak (2000), "While Boomers were topping the population charts-the birth rate climbed above four million per year for most of the Boomer's two decade run-Xers were the inevitable birthing recession after the boom, with a low in 1976 when only 3.2 million babies were born. That's seventy-six million Boomers versus fifty one million Xers." (p.94). Due to the drop in the population the number of younger people available to law enforcement agencies to recruit from dropped dramatically in the last twelve years. A second factor is

economics. The national and local economy fluctuates in cycles that are long enough in time to seem unrelated to the casual observer.

However, this economic turn of events produce periods of difficulty in finding quality employment for the average worker at a time when people are seeking stability. During times when other jobs are not available, many people turn to law enforcement whereas they would not have during periods of high job availability. Until a few years ago this situation along with the high number of people in the work force produced a vast field of qualified people who turned to law enforcement as a career. Their numbers made recruitment and hiring highly competitive and beneficial to most agencies and organizations. The situation has now reversed itself. Law enforcement agencies are having a difficult time attracting enough qualified applicants to fill their training academies.

The third situation to develop slowly over the last few years was the change in work force age and its underlying culture. In today's employment field, the younger generation ready to join the work force appears to measure a jobs worth only in monetary terms. In addition, the younger individual does not expect to stay in one job for a long period of time. A company, organization or agency may now be looked upon as a simple stepping-stone to eventual job satisfaction down the road. Most law enforcement agencies have failed to identify the core values of this generation and therefore have not been successful in understanding what is important to them.

THE GEN XERS

Core Values

- Diversity
- Thinking Globally
- Balance
- Technology
- Fun
- Informality
- Self-reliance
- Pragmatism

Zemke, Raines and Filipczak, (p.98).

Today the entire situation has been compounded by the recent loss of revenue almost every department and agency must come to grips with. While the actual numbers are not in to date, virtually all law enforcement and public service agencies may be forced to freeze or possibility even cut back their work force due to this shortfall in the budgets.

Due to the current set of circumstances many agencies have found themselves in, two questions are now the focal point of both long term and short term strategic planning from leaders and managers.

1. What is the cause of the high turnover rate and difficulty of recruiting qualified applicants?

2. What can be done to reverse this trend?

This paper will attempt to offer solutions and answers to the above questions by presenting material and subject matter relative to the issues stated. There is some thought from managers today that the issue of retention and recruitment are entirely related to monetary incentives. While the literature acknowledges the value of just compensation and fair wages, there are other factors revealed that contribute to employee morale and well being that may have been overlooked. Evans and Lindsay (1999) find that, "Despite the countless articles and books written about it, leadership is one of the least-understood concepts in business." (p.221).

Literature Review

There is a tremendous wealth of information from books, articles, online websites, magazines, etc. on the role of management and leadership in producing a strong and productive work force for an organization. Virtually all material echo the rapid and continual changes the world is facing today, and, that for an organization to stand still and do nothing is a recipe for disaster. Hesselbein, Goldsmith, and Beckhard (1996) include an article in which Stephen Covey observes, "The world has changed in a very profound way. This change continues to happen all around us, all the time. This is a white water world" (p. 150). Recent trends delve into the theory that quality leadership at all levels of an organization can create the positive change organizations are looking for. Agencies and organizations that have not evolved and steered away from the classic method of management into a human behavioral science style of management may be missing important elements to their overall success. Information available suggests the role and influence of leadership is so important it should not be considered a small part of overall management skill and training as in the past; yet many of the articles and books on the subject mention leadership in an organization as being undervalued and overlooked.

As reported by Evans and Lindsey (1999), "The success of an organization depends on the performance of the workers at the bottom of the pyramid. Ross Perot once said that inventories can be managed, but people must be led. All managers... must act as the organization's leaders for quality" (p. 125). Furthermore, modern theory points out the fact that quality leadership should be an integral part of every agencies core. Kahn (2007) writes, "... leadership is the key quality which every manager must acquire to become an effective manager. A manager may develop a perfect strategy to make an organization successful, but to carry forward that strategy towards realization, he or she needs leadership qualities. Leadership, then takes a bigger, broader and more important role" (p. 1). The shift towards exemplary leadership skills is a shift towards understanding the value of the employee. The change in employee needs has been gradual up until a few years ago. However, due to rapid communication and readily available information from the WEB, the situation has manifested at an alarming rate. The information available clearly sees leadership as the key to success for any organization in the twenty first century. While always acknowledged as a small part of the management plan, the projection of strong leadership practices has now developed into the cornerstone of organizations ability to survive. Certo (2000) contends, "Leadership has always been considered a prerequisite for organizational success.

Today, given the increased capability afforded by enhanced communication technology and the rise of international business, leadership is more important than ever before” (p.327). Certo continues on by explaining the next step necessary to achieve organizational success. Simple management skills and abilities are not enough in today’s environment. Managers must combine previous skills with leadership skills in order to produce a favorable result. This leadership skill is a shift to understand the power of the human element or, “a genuine concern for workers as people (leadership)” (p.327). Management can no longer use the outdated “command and coercion” style and expect success. The workforce has changed. This is not necessarily a bad change but a change that must be acknowledged and reacted to. Kahn describes the trend as follows. “Today’s employees have easy access to information... and know more than the employees knew ten years ago. This has resulted in well informed, educated and intelligent work force. To get things done from these people, the traditional management concepts of control and fear motivation are not working. To motivate today’s employees concepts like positive reinforcement, teamwork, empowerment, etc. are required which comes from leadership” (p.2, 3).

Method

The purpose of this research paper has three parts. First, to discover if there is a relationship between strong leadership practices and employee morale, retention, recruitment, and the ability to obtain organizational goals and objectives. Second, is leadership skill and ability a recognized asset during the promotion selection and last, will a literature review support the positive aspects of strong leadership style in an organization. Most of the research generated for this paper is found in the textbooks used in college courses on management, leadership, human resource development and professional organizational management. Course titles associated with this literature include administration, leadership, business management, organizational management, human resource development and other like courses. Articles used were found in journals and publications associated with the above-mentioned course titles.

In addition, a five-question survey on the subject (Appendix “A”) was submitted to 48 people representing upper and middle level management in various law enforcement agencies. While some surveys are based on employee input it was determined this paper should be based on management perspective for a number of reasons.

Population, geography, mission and objectives may affect the organizational needs of an agency. What may work for one organization may not work for another. For the most part, only management could answer the questions that reveal an agencies core values and strategic planning for success. All members of SLP class 12 were asked to complete the survey along with leaders and managers from other state agencies. See appendix “B” for a list of the agencies whose representative responded.

Results

48 surveys were sent out and 35 were filled out generating a 72% return rate. The responses to question number one on defining leadership revealed a mix of different wording to describe definitive traits and qualities along the same themes.

Everyone knew what to look for in a strong leader. Virtually all responses hit upon some of the well known traits found in quality leaders. Vision, honesty, integrity, setting goals and influencing others appeared in many answers. In response to the second part in question number one on the importance of leadership to an organization 30% did not respond. Of those that did, most felt very strong about its importance. Comments provided to this question include the following.

- *“The leader of any agency makes the agency a success or failure.”*
- *“It is a vital part of any agency.”*
- *“Its importance on a scale of 1 – 10 would be about 25!”*
- *“Leadership is critical...”*

When the respondents were asked in question number two if their agency encouraged and employed strong leadership practices (see appendix “A”) 31 replied yes while four replied no. The second part of the question asked, “If yes, has your agency experienced a positive/negative change in any of the following areas due to leadership practices?”

- ❑ Morale: 29 replied positive, four replied negative, two did not respond.
- ❑ Recruitment: 21 replied positive, two replied negative while eight stated unknown and four did not answer
- ❑ Retention: 24 replied positive, four replied negative and seven did not respond or did not know
- ❑ Agency Goals, Mission and Objectives: 19 replied positive, seven did not respond or did not know

Of the four that replied no to question number two, two did not respond to the questions pertaining to morale, recruitment, retention, and agency goals. The other two who did respond replied “negative” to the same questions regarding morale, recruitment, retention and goals. Many responders replied unknown to question number two on recruitment or left the answer space blank. Four indicated they were not part of that process (recruitment) and therefore unaware of the status in this area.

Question number three asked the respondents how they acquired their own supervisory and leadership skills. Almost all replied with a mix of mentoring (22), training (19) and formal education (8). 13 mentioned mentoring alone and nothing else.

In question number four respondents were asked what kind of traits should a leader possess. Honesty, integrity, leading by example, fairness, and confidence were mentioned in many of the responses. Part of question four asked if leadership practices or traits in an individual have any influence in the organizations promotional process. 22 replied yes while five replied no. Of the five that replied no, four were from the group (of four) that replied no to all questions in number two.

Question number five asked, “How do you prepare young officers for a leadership role.” Mentoring, training, by example, education and experience were mentioned on 68% of the responses. Interesting, only one responder mentioned an actual program designed for succession planning, *“Career pathing is a key component for newer personnel.”* If other agencies have actual programs in place, it was not mentioned in the responses. Comments from question number five include, *“The first*

step is to encourage them to further their education. Also, put them in a position where they can prove their leadership abilities such as training programs or running a volunteer group.” Most relied on mentoring as the sole method of preparing officers to be leaders.

Many respondents added comments related to leadership, morale and employee retention. Some of the comments on leadership practices as put forth in question number two were positive. When question two asked if their agency employed strong leadership practices throughout its ranks, one survey comment was, *“Yes, we are implementing statewide leadership training for all supervisory levels... morale has improved positively.”* Another respondent writes, *“Yes, morale is higher. Personnel enjoy working with professional leaders... higher morale makes for longer term employees.”*

Of those that took the time to reflect on their organization that possessed positive leadership qualities, there appears to be a lack of negative comments or answers to the survey’s questions. Other comments recorded under question two include the following.

- *“Our morale has benefited from an increase in the quality of leadership displayed by officers in our command staff. The “good old boy” system has been dismantled”*
- *“Recruitment has been positive because of the change in leadership. We are viewed more favorably as an agency.”*
- *“The current leadership from the chief on down has created an atmosphere where there is positive morale.”*

On the issue of low morale in their organization under question two, some respondents wrote the following.

- *“...morale is low due to lack of positive leadership.”*
- *“Current command staff do not put much emphasis on increasing morale.”*
- *“The captain of one section has done little to address morale (has done more to damage it) and the result has been evident in high turnover.”*

One respondent that replied yes to question number two yet indicated that morale had gone down made this comment when asked if this agency employed strong leadership practices, *“Yes, but not as strongly as they should at Cpl. and Sgt. level.”*

Discussion

The survey appears to offer a correlation or association between strong leadership practices in an organization and positive effects on employee morale. Some statements make a clear mention of high morale due to solid leadership practices and a corresponding hike in retention, recruitment and obtaining agency goals and objectives. Literature points out that leadership ability and practices have always been treated as a 10% part of management. It is now acknowledged that this system will not work in today’s organizations with any degree of effectiveness or success. Strong, quality

leadership is now regarded as one of the most valuable skills and assets in any business, agency or organization. Quality leadership is now viewed as a profession.

There is a definite trend in modern organizational management that centers on the needs of the employee.

Long gone are the days when managers could rule their domain with little regard for the people under their control. The control of workers (without their input) and the work they did will no longer work for most organizations. In order to survive in today's complicated and fast moving pace, management styles must rotate towards the needs of the workers by making them a part of the team that has a opinion in the way to achieve organizational goals and objectives. As Certo observes, "... organizations are emphasizing leadership styles that concentrate on getting employees involved in the organization and giving them the freedom to use their abilities as they think best" (p.342).

Just being that leader as described and taught in years past may not be enough. Talk of the need for transformational leaders, enlightened leaders, the trait approach, style approach, etc. are mentioned in most of the text books reviewed. While the books dedicated to a particular style or type of leadership were most common 10 to 15 years ago, that has recently changed. Virtually all modern literature on leadership contends one style alone is not enough to ensure success. Tomorrow's leader will need to blend the different styles in order to fit each situation. There will be no more one size fits all. The exceptional leader will need to recognize the situation and adapt their style accordingly, be it due to organizational culture, the work performed or even individual employees. Or, as stated by Northouse (1997) as he refers to situational leadership, "...demands that a leader matches his or her style to the competence and commitment of the subordinates" (p. 54). An organization may even make the leap to super leadership. In this instance, the leader has the ability to encourage employees to become leaders in their own right. Confidence, empowerment and the ability to take charge of their own situation can produce an organization of workers who lead themselves.

Whatever one wishes to refer to it as, the underling theme and foundation to success in all of the literature is in the organizations ability to shift towards a leadership style that embraces employee needs and the integration of human resource development with the leadership/management mode.

There is a secondary theme this paper explores and it is the theories behind human motivation. Management in many organizations believe that salary and monetary incentives are the most effective means to motivate an employee. Research on the other hand shows a different set of circumstances may influence job performance. While money cannot be dismissed as it is a core to why people perform tasks, it needs to be put into perspective. There are many other factors that will motivate a work force and many of them center around the type and quality of leadership the organization possesses. Frederick Herzberg's research as presented by Certo reveals two different factors that influence job satisfaction.

Maintenance Factors	Motivating Factors
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Company policy and administration 2. Supervision 3. Relationship with supervisor 4. Relationship with peers 5. Working conditions 6. Salary 7. Relationship with subordinates 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Opportunity for achievement 2. Opportunity for recognition 3. Work itself 4. Responsibility 5. Advancement 6. Personal growth

Herzberg believes maintenance factors may keep an employee from being dissatisfied but when motivating factors are high, “employees usually are motivated to do a better job” (Certo, p. 365).

While dated to some degree, many researchers and leaders still find the work of Abraham Maslow to be accurate and a good model to follow. Under Maslow’s hierarchy of needs as outlined by DuBrin (1999), people have basic needs of physiological, safety, and social contact that once met, open the door to a higher order of needs including self esteem and self actualization (p. 296, 297). Today’s literature suggests managers need to understand the self esteem and self actualization levels of their employee’s needs and incorporate this philosophy in their leadership practices.

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Appendix "A"

Survey questions

1. How do you define leadership in law enforcement and its importance to an organization?

2. Does your agency encourage and employ strong leadership practices throughout the supervisory ranks including front line supervisors?

If yes, has your agency experienced a positive/negative change in any of the following areas due to leadership practices?

- Morale
- Recruitment
- Retention
- Agency Goals, Mission and Objectives

3. How did your skills and abilities as a law enforcement leader develop over the years? Was there an event, a particular training or educational opportunity, or an individual who had more impact on your development than any other?

4. What kind of traits should a law enforcement leader possess?

- How do you measure/evaluate those traits?
- Are there any traits more important than others?
- Do leadership practices in work history have any influence in your organization's promotional process?

5. How do you prepare young officers for a leadership role?

Appendix "B"

Altamonte Springs Police Department	Lee County Sheriff's Office
Charlotte County Sheriff's Office	Marion County Sheriff's Office
Collier County Sheriff's Office	Melbourne Police Department
Eustis Police Department	Ocala Police Department
Florida Department of Corrections	Okaloosa County Sheriff's Office
Florida Department of Environmental Protection	Orange County Corrections Department
Florida Highway Patrol	Palm Bay Police Department
Florida Department of Law Enforcement	Panama City Police Department
Florida State University	Pinellas County Sheriff's Office
Florida Department of Transportation/ Motor Carrier Compliance	Plantation Police Department
Fort Pierce Police Department	Polk County Sheriff's Office
Hillsborough County Sheriff's Office	Santa Rosa County Sheriff's Office
Jacksonville Sheriff's Office	St. Lucie County Sheriff's Office
Lakeland Police Department	University of South Florida Police Department
	Volusia County Division of Corrections