

Assessment Center Processes: Do They Yield The Best Leader for the Right Position?

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Abstract

Can the development and implementation of an effective Promotional Process affect morale positively, be used as a recruitment tool, market the agency and the agency's head, and be unbiased? Can a good promotional process enhance the agency's ability to identify the best leaders for the right position, ensure equality to all promotional participants, without losing control of the promotional system? Gathered from the state of Florida from local, county, and state law enforcement agencies through surveys from these agencies, and other sources, an attempt will be made to identify the best promotional processes available around the state, nation, and the world. A look at different processes may provide good information to any agency.

Introduction

Looking back from the beginning of our great nation, the United States of America, we have continually evolved, sometimes gradually and other times abruptly. A few of the momentous changes to our nation started with the American Revolutionary War, Emancipation Proclamation, Civil War, the great depression of 1929, and the Civil Rights movements. At the forefront, and most important, was our nation's plight to organize a government, which was developed with a check and balance system to ensure no one person or entity will have too much power. This great vision by some of our forefathers was used to create a democracy which involved a check and balance of power for our nation, whereby the Executive Branch, the Judicial Branch, and the Legislative Branch has equal powers which helped make this nation one of the greatest in the world.

What does a properly developed promotional system have to do with democracy? Our nation is arguably one of the greatest in the world because of the check and balances of power contained in its government. These checks and balances implemented in our government at the beginning of our nation were created to ensure that life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness were guaranteed to all. In modern day law enforcement agencies, a good promotional system must exist to ensure life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness are guaranteed to all within that agency. Although these guarantees are seemingly hidden behind new laws like; civil rights, equal rights, discrimination, and consent decrees, to name a few, they are all a form of check and balances to ensure life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness to all. Law enforcement agencies must continue to evolve, not only in technology, equipment, and knowledge, but also in leadership development. An effective promotional system could help an agency identify its best leaders. Candidates selected for managerial positions through an effective promotional system have been found to be two to three times more likely to succeed at higher management levels than those promoted on the basis of other tests

or supervisory judgments (Page, 1995). Additionally, it will have the principles of a democracy embedded in its procedures that will share responsibilities for promotion to leadership positions. A good effective promotional process is a recipe for success for an agency whereby it will afford the agency the ability to identify the best leaders.

Literature Review

Law enforcement agencies has evolved; however, mostly gradually and not without a fight to inevitable changes. Although some laws were developed for a much larger group of affected people, these laws impacted law enforcement agencies promotional system. When you look at Civil Rights Laws, Equal Opportunity Laws, Affirmative Action, and Consent Decrees, which came into existence for the majority of society, promotional systems that recognize these laws or initiatives have helped reduce the financial burden it can inflict on a law enforcement agency's budget, when claims of wrong-doings are discovered due to no clearly defined promotional guidelines. Page states, "...the ever-increasing numbers of litigations relating to promotional examinations which have been filed... more and more municipalities are going the assessment center route." It becomes clear why organizations must evolve in the way they conduct their promotional system. In modern day law enforcement, specifically equality in promoting has been a controversial problem in which an effective promotional process is very necessary. However, there are certain values that must be adhered to; fairness, security, validity; to name a few is incorporated.

The Assessment Center Handbook identifies and discusses several statements and recommendations that must be considered by agencies in using an effective assessment process to identify candidates for promotion (Page, 1995). Page defined an assessment center as "a structured series of activities, or exercises...these exercises are developed to enable individuals trained as assessors to observe a candidate's behavior and document a score based on the candidate's performance." The history of assessment centers over the last two decades is becoming a more popular testing method of evaluating participants' behaviors for promotion purposes. Using these assessment center processes include law enforcement agencies, large independent corporations, the Internal Revenue Service and Social Security Administration. Identified as an immediate concern for law enforcement agencies are the costs for administering the assessment center process which can be upwards of five hundred dollars (\$500.00) per participant. "If you are from a large department, you must understand that with the cost of using assessment centers in these days of tight budgets, not everyone can be allowed to compete in the process" (Page, 1995). To improvise for this cost rather than give into the old style of pencil and paper test only, the written test with a cutoff figure would be used to cut down on the number of participants thereby reducing costs. Additionally, agencies can also cut costs by implementing a minimum years of service to be eligible and combination of written test and evaluation score cutoff. Page's preference is for agencies to use a written test with a cutoff score and the assessment center process results for final tabulation. "Using a percentage of the written examination allows an agency to guarantee that, at a

minimum, the candidate has a good working knowledge of the agency's operating procedures, laws, etc" (Page, 1995). There are many reasons for law enforcement agencies to continue with or implement the assessment center process. Some of the other main characteristics are the accuracy of the process, the learning experience for the participant and the assessors, high management acceptance, and positive acceptance by participants. The core of an assessment center as the development of the job analysis is "the foundation of an assessment center is called a job or task analysis" (Page, 1995).

At the forefront and as general concern amongst most law enforcement executives when discussing assessment center processes is the concern of giving up all or most of their authority to outside entities in making promotions for their agencies. First, we must remember that the participant's behavior is being evaluated, which is often more important than your knowledge of the position. A participant's knowledge of the position is important and should be embellished, especially, in law enforcement, but identified behavior strengths is most critical. Page's message is clear that an appropriately administered assessment center process whereby participants exhibit strength in the targeted behaviors identified for the effected position, the agency will know that they will be able to function at a high level within that position. "The chairman of the Ford Motor Company could direct the operation of IBM without any direct knowledge of how to produce computers...individuals exhibit the behaviors that show that they can function as the CEO of any company, no matter what the product line is" (Page, 1995). Additionally, Page gives his personal opinion based on his experience as a nearly thirty (30) year police officer as it relates to performing in assessment center processes versus promotional processes of old. He discusses why employee personal evaluation reports are of limited use and ineffective as an accurate promotional tool. He believes that the assessment center process is the most job-related testing process he has ever seen. He frankly stated, "Most of us know those individuals who are "book cops" and can write a good exam paper, but frankly are lousy street cops when it comes to doing the job as a police officer or making command decisions as a supervisor" (Page, 1995).

The job or task analysis has been called the foundation of an assessment center which encompasses the very important and known dimensions used. However, just as critical and probably the most neglected is the role of the assessor and their training for the process. Like job or task analysis, assessor training has been called the backbone of an assessment center process. Page identifies some disadvantages associated with the role of the assessor. First, he disagrees with using non-law enforcement outside agency assessors because he does not believe they can objectively rate police officers due to there being more dissimilarities than similarities. Page states, "There are some similarities between doctors and dentists also, but I don't think a dentist should review a doctor's work and vice versa." Most important, discussed was the lack of time and commitment agencies dedicate to training the assessors. Page states, "I usually recommend at least forty (40) hours of assessor training." This lack of commitment to assessor training can render a well designed, developed, costly assessment center process that meet fairness and lack bias ineffective. Page states, "I find it ludicrous that an agency would spend the time, money and energy in developing an assessment

center and then go “cheap” on the time committed to one of the most important aspects of the center-assessor training.”

Page’s final words, indicate no matter what an agency’s choice of a promotional system, their chances of holding an assessment center process in the near future is increasing. As law enforcement agencies continue to evolve, the growing trends of being faced with manpower reductions, budget cuts, and the need to get leaders in positions of management, assessment centers have proven to be the method to accomplish this. Recent history has shown that there have been an increasing number of legal issues relating to promotional tests filed by law enforcement agencies causing more entities to use assessment center processes. “Past studies of assessment centers indicate a high degree of fairness and an absence of bias with regard to both race and sex, which has not characterized the more traditional forms of promotional testing” (Page, 1995).

In an article by Cullen, Evaluating Executive Talent using Assessment Centers, he examines some history of assessment centers, and some pros & cons of the assessment centers. Additionally, he listed three companies that successfully use the assessment centers in their companies. Historically, assessment centers has been around for over sixty (60) years and was initially for assessing, developing and training of entry level personnel and later was used for higher-level positions.

Some ‘cons’ identified when using an Assessment Center process in evaluating and promoting higher-level managers and executives, are high-level candidates do not like the intrusive nature of assessment centers for promotion, especially, when the results are not in their favor. Candidates believe that the skills and capabilities are not unique and their recent past work performance may be more superior to results from the assessment center process. Assessment centers are expensive to administer; and has significant legal risks if procedures and guidelines are not strictly followed’ (Cullen, n.d.).

Some ‘pros’ identified when using an assessment Center process in evaluating and promoting higher-level managers and executives, are high-level candidates are concerned about equality of all candidates. Cullen states, “Assessment centers provide a “visible” level playing field.” An advantage of an effective assessment center is it provides the means for evaluation of the very important interpersonal skills characteristic. It helps to develop, provide feedback and experience to candidates and assessors for growth as managers and leaders” (Cullen, n.d.).

Cullen identifies three very successful companies as using very effective assessment centers for developing and promoting their higher-level managers. The first company is a United States company based in the United Kingdom which has been using assessment center processes for over five (5) years to develop identified potential individuals for promotion to partner. The second company, a Global Energy Company, has been using assessment center processes for over twenty years to develop high potential individuals and it is maintained by a full-time staff of an assessment expert and administrators. The third company, a Fortune 100 global multi-product technology company, uses the assessment center processes in a web-based platform where participants simulate the desired technical, business, and leadership skills.

Hughes addressed the concern of whether the Assessment Center process benefits outweigh their cost. Specifically, discussed was the concern of law enforcement

agencies effectively identifying its managers. "There are two methods that can be used to accomplish the objective of identifying and selecting the right personnel to management positions" (Hughes, 2006).

The first method is the Traditional Methods and its basic components and characteristics, which are the written test, credit for seniority, and personal evaluations of past job performance. This method appeared to be very limited and pose more negative characteristics than positive characteristics. For example, the written examination is very important and provides a good starting foundation for knowledge of their agency's policies and procedures for good supervision. However, written examinations alone are insufficient. Hughes states, "The information is a basic necessary starting point for good supervision, but alone it does not sufficiently ensure success in police administration and leadership." Credit points for seniority should be recognized and used based on traditions of old. Negatively, credit for seniority is ineffective because most candidates have similar years of service. Credit for seniority at lower-level positions does not guarantee that a candidate possesses the desired skills needed for higher-level positions. Personal evaluations has about the same observation as seniority credits, other than tradition, there is nothing of substance that can be identified as positive. Recent history concerning reliability of personal evaluations or employee rating systems has been identified as extremely ineffective. "Rating Errors' which are present in these systems continue to render most all rating systems as a marginal supervisory tool" (Hughes, 2006).

The second method is the Assessment Center Method with some of its most important characteristics, from legal intervention, development and job analysis, to assessor training, to name a few. This method is beginning to be implemented with more law enforcement agencies to identify a more effective promotion system because of influences from the federal government. Unlike the traditional methods, assessment center methods has been credited by private entities for being able to measure behavioral dimensions that are critical for selecting future leaders. Hughes believes that the use of an assessment center is the most important means to help law enforcement to evolve from the old traditional methods by helping to develop and select future leaders. Hughes states, "Assessment centers are considered the most valid and reliable methodology to rank order candidates using an objective technique that recognizes future potential." Due to its uniqueness, assessment centers are said to be very versatile and can be effectively used to select the right candidate from entry level employees, specialized positions, to high-level positions. The negative aspect to Assessment Centers will be the cost. This is a very reasonable question that must be answered and articulated as a long-range budgetary goal. The cost has been identified as a disadvantage, especially, when compared to the costs of traditional methods and short-range budgetary goals. However, due to the very nature of its adaptability, legal acceptance, efficiency, reliable, and proven ability to yield returns of the best leaders, cost must be considered in perspective. Hughes states, "To consider expense as the sole factor in selecting the methodology for the police promotion process overlooks potential long-term savings. Promoting an individual to a position where they have not demonstrated the necessary knowledge, skills, and abilities to effectively perform will have repercussions on the entire agency." In addition to other advantages of a properly

designed and administered assessment center process, is the objective that it evaluates what candidates can do and what they know” (Hughes, 2006).

The agency heads should remember they must assume leadership, responsibility, and they must stay active in the development and implementation of their agency’s promotional system. They must understand that it is a tool that must be used properly and administered properly to yield them the desired end result of selecting the best managers and more importantly, the best leaders for their agency. Although traditional methods are limited, they have their benefits when used in the right perspective with the new evolving trend of assessment centers (Hughes 2006).

Michelson’s article, entitled Preparing Future Leaders for Tomorrow: Succession Planning for Police Leadership, parallels other assessment center articles concern for leadership development. Michelson states the most important objective of an assessment center, is to identify, develop, and select law enforcement leaders. Here Michelson states, “Leadership in public safety agencies is at a critical crossroads.” “In 2003 a Human Resource Institute survey found that nearly three-quarters of all human resource professionals who responded saw leadership as extremely important issue and consequently, a method to validate the department’s assessments of supervisors and managers are necessary” (Michelson, 2006). Additionally, it suggests agencies solely relying on the traditional promotional methods as a critical matter for promotion selection and has the least validity. Michelson stated, “...the cost of a bad hiring (or bad promotion) can be as high as 200 percent of a year’s salary.” The assessment center process is identified as the means to accomplish succession planning for leadership (Michelson, 2006). Traditional Methods are ineffective and provides very little towards leadership preparation, and by using subjective interviews that merely tell interviewees what they want to hear. “Assessment centers have long proven their worth in their ability to predict long-term success in leadership and other positions” (Michelson, 2006).

Charles Hale writes in an article entitled Pros and Cons of Assessment Centers, the need for agency executives to become very knowledgeable of Assessment Center characteristics. Properly designed and administered assessment centers are said to be more reliable than traditional methods. It is a very adaptable management tool and can be used for entry-level positions, dispatchers, to high-level executives. With the emergence of the many different support entities that has been created; EEOC, Civil Rights, to name a few; the assessment center processes are easy to defend when claims of unfair or illegal practices are brought into the legal arena. Directly related to the claims of unfair practices, assessment centers are inherently fair and objective and is designed to reflect diversity, particularly when it comes to claims of violations that adversely impact protected groups. What a person can do versus what they know has always been controversial. The assessment center is designed so that simply having the knowledge of objectives by memorization of basic principles will not be enough to reflect well upon a candidate. “A person may have a high intellect and a college degree but will be worthless as a supervisor if he is unable to make critical decisions under pressure or lacks the leadership ability to get subordinates to do what he wants them to” (Hale 2005). Candidates favor assessment center processes and most believe they are fair and objective. Assessment Centers provide feedback on the candidate’s strengths and weaknesses that are being evaluated (Hale, 2005).

Assessment Centers may not solve all problems associated with promotional testing processes, such as greater expense, and it is challenging to administer. Additionally, participants may feel uncomfortable with the process and feel like their past performance should be rewarded, role players may fail to report, equipment may malfunction, and vital information may be passed between participants. Assessment centers are said to not be without discrepancies, although it can accurately evaluate a candidate's ability, it can not predict the candidate's desire or effort to perform at the higher level. "A candidate may possess the ability to perform, but lack the willingness or motivation to do the job" (Hale, 2005). Improperly designed assessment center processes can produce bad results, so shortcuts or the cheap route should not be taken. Lastly, identified as a disadvantage is the lack of control the agency head will have over his promotional system when a proper assessment center process is implemented. Agency Heads may feel they have no control over their Assessment Center processes, however, that is far from the truth. When Agency Heads become knowledgeable and remain involved in the development of their Assessment Center promotional system, they will be able to give and receive critical information to the identification and development of future leaders. Additionally, Assessment Center characteristics give credibility to the agency and the Agency Head by the reinforced objectivity of the process and having those with no vested interests administering the process which ensure that it is fair and equitable to all (Hale, 2005).

Method

The purpose of this research is to determine if a Promotional Assessment Center is the best process available to law enforcement agencies in identifying and promoting their best leaders to the right position. One survey was developed and distributed to the twenty six (26) separate law enforcement agencies represented in the Senior Leadership Program Class #12. Another similar survey was developed and distributed to Florida Highway Patrol sworn members on their Information Survey System through the agency's computer intranet system. Other than the Florida Highway Patrol, the surveys attempted to identify how many agencies use an assessment center process.

The information gathered identified whether all agencies have a promotional system and what testing instruments are used. It will also reflect the advantages and disadvantages of it and if it is viewed as biased or unbiased. Then it will reflect whether current promotional systems are considered biased throughout or only at the top levels.

The surveys showed the trend of agencies using the Assessment Center Process in relationship to the size of the agency, and how Assessment Center Processes are viewed from state, county, local law enforcement agencies. Lastly, will an Assessment Center process rid most agencies of real or perceived perceptions of biased promotional systems? (See appendix B and C).

Results

This survey received a 69 percent response rate from members of the SLP Class #12, with 18 of the 26 agencies participating. Eight agencies indicated that they did not have an established promotional system. A second survey was to be distributed to the Florida Highway Patrol, so the information will be clearly identified separately, see appendix C. 485 responses were received out of 1617 sworn members of the Florida Highway Patrol, a 30 percent response rate. 180 responses were from supervisors from the rank of sergeant and above, out of a total 409 sworn supervisors, a 44 percent response rate.

There are 26 different agencies, FHP not inclusive, represented in the Senior Leader Program Class #12; however, agencies which did not have a established promotional process were excluded from completing this survey. This left the responding agencies of 18, which were 5 Local, 11 County, and 2 State agencies. The agencies ranged in size from 97 to 1700, with an average of 548 sworn positions per agency. The Florida State Department of Corrections had 19,855 officers; however, these numbers were not used for the average due to the agency's unique makeup of prison, probation & parole officers, etc that would make it very difficult to survey the different specialty divisions.

When asked does your agency have an established written promotional policy, 17 out of 18 responding agencies had an established written promotional policy and one agency had a promotional system, but not written. The Florida Highway Patrol has an established promotional policy which is used from the rank of corporal to major and they do not use the Assessment Center process as part of their promotional system. Of the 18 agencies responding, 8 used an Assessment Center process as part of their promotional system. Other than the rank of corporal, which most agencies do not utilize, the use of the promotion systems are used mostly at the lower ranks and use of a promotional system decreases as the rank increases. There were 17 agencies using a promotional system for sergeant through major and only 3 of those 17 agencies using a promotional system for above the rank of major.

SENIOR LEADERSHIP CLASS # 12 PROGRAM RESPONDENTS

In identifying the types of testing instrument components currently being utilized by other participating agencies: (multiple items can be selected for this response)

- 15 (88%) agencies used the review of the personnel files
- 9 (52%) used personal interviews
- 8(47%) used written tests
- 6 (35%) used assessment center processes
- 7 (41%) used the internal interview board
- 1(6%) used the external interview board
- 3 (17%) used a combination internal/external interview board
- 3 (17%) used other instruments.

In identifying the number of times respondents participated in their promotional process by other participating agencies:

- 8 (44%) respondents participated in a promotional process between 1 to 3 times
- 8 (44%) participated 4 to 6 times
- 2 (11%) participated more than 10 times.

When asked, why any respondent did not participate in a promotional process: (multiple items can be selected for this response)

- 15 (88%) never responded
- 2 (11%) cited their reason was for requiring to move and loss of overtime compensation.

At what rank should a yearly written test be part of the promotional process: (multiple items can be selected for this response)

- 9 for corporal
- 15 for sergeant
- 12 for lieutenant
- 2 for captain
- 0 for major and above
- 2 other

When asked what testing instruments should be used for promotions of the ranks of lieutenant and above for other agencies participants: (multiple items can be selected for this response)

- 16 should use personnel files
- 15 should use personal interviews
- 9 should use written tests
- 2 should use assessment center processes using external personnel
- 5 should use the internal interview board
- 2 should use the external interview board
- 6 should use a combination internal/external interview board.

The ranks of the officers representing the 17 responding agencies were:

- 8 lieutenants
- 8 captains
- 1 above the rank of major.

The total years of experience of the responding officers are:

- 2 from 11 to 15
- 5 from 16 to 20
- 11 over 20 years

When asked if a properly designed and administered promotional assessment center process can rid their agency of real or perceived unfair promotional practices:

- 8 responded yes
- 8 responded no
- 2 no responses

When asked if a properly designed and administered Promotional assessment center process can identify and select the best leaders:

- 8 responded yes
- 8 responded no
- 2 no responses

Both questions received the exact responses, 8 believed the assessment center process can rid their agencies of unfair practices, 8 did not believe, and 2 did not respond.

FLORIDA HIGHWAY PATROL RESPONDENTS

Currently, the Florida Highway Patrol utilizes a written test for corporals, a written test with an interview component for sergeant, and an interview component only for captain and major positions.

In identifying the number of times respondents participated in their promotional process by Florida Highway Patrol participants:

- 225 (46%) participated 1 to 3 times
- 105 (22%) participated 4 to 6 times
- 27 (5%) participated 7 to 9 times
- 22 (4%) participated more than 10 times
- 106 (21%) did not participated

When Florida Highway Patrol respondents were asked why they did not participate in a promotional process: (multiple items can be selected for this response)

- 227 (64%) of 353 indicated they would have been required to move
- 206 (58%) of 353 said it was not enough promotional pay
- 109 (30%) of 353 did not want to loose overtime pay
- 75 (21%) of 353 did not think the process was impartial
- 86 (24%) of 353 did not think the process was fair.
- 25 (07%) of 353 said it was too much responsibility with the position.

When the Florida Highway Patrol respondents were asked at what rank should a yearly written test be part of the promotional process: (multiple items could be selected for this response)

- 319 (65%) for corporal
- 410 (84%) for sergeant
- 327 (67%) for lieutenant

- 260 (53%) for captain
- 195 (40%) for major.

When asked what testing instruments should be used for promotions of the ranks of lieutenant and above for the Florida Highway Patrol:

- 395 (82%) for personal interviews
- 423 (87%) for review of personal files
- 260 (53%) for written tests
- 188 (38%) for assessment center processes
- 219 (45%) for the internal interview board
- 99 (20%) for the external interview board
- 176 (36%) for use of a combination internal/external interview board.

The ranks of the Florida Highway Patrol respondents were represented by:

- 5 (71%) of 7 above major
- 7 (46%) of 15 majors
- 19 (41%) of 46 captains
- 61 (48%) of 125 lieutenants
- 88 (42%) of 207 sergeants
- 305 (23%) of 1312 corporals and troopers.

The percentages reflect the number of total positions for the identified rank.

The total years of experience of the responding officers are:

- 54 (11%) from 1 to 5
- 61 (12%) from 6 to 10
- 82 (16%) from 11 to 15
- 87 (17%) from 16 to 20
- 201 (41%) over 20 years

When asked if a properly designed and administered promotional assessment center process can rid their agency of real or perceived unfair promotional practices:

- 265 (55%) responded yes
- 220 (45%) responded no

When asked if a properly designed and administered promotional assessment center process can identify and select the best leaders:

- 264 (54%) responded yes
- 221 (46%) responded no

When Florida Highway Patrol respondents were asked, if a properly designed and administered promotional assessment center process can rid their agency of real or perceived unfair promotional practices, 265 (54%) believed the assessment center process can rid the agency of unfair practices and 220 (45%) did not believe the assessment center process could rid the agency of real or perceived unfair practices. When asked if a properly designed and administered promotional Assessment Center

process can identify and select the best leaders, 264 (54%) believed it could and 221(45%) did not believe it could.

Discussion

I found it surprising that only eight of the twenty-seven different law enforcement agencies, including the Florida Highway Patrol, represented in the Senior Leadership Class #12 from throughout the state of Florida used an Assessment Center process for promotion. When I started this project I believed that all but the very smallest agencies would have a modern promotional system. However, the data revealed that only eight of the participating agencies have a promotional system that, at a minimum, simulated an Assessment Center Process was surprising. Unexpectedly, the data revealed all agencies, even the smallest, use more than just a written test for promotion. What I discovered is most agencies apply some components or combinations or theories of assessment center processes. One agency used a “Matrix System” as part of their promotional process. What this entails is a point system whereby participants receive points or deduction of points for various elements, such as, education, disciplinary matters, and time in grade and service to name a few. I noticed that smaller agencies appeared to be more understanding with their promotional systems than larger agencies. Unfortunately, the survey information retrieved did not allow for the identification of this trend.

When the Senior Leadership Program Class #12 respondents were asked, “Do you believe a properly designed and administered Promotional Assessment Center process can rid your agency of real or perceived unfair promotional practices?”, I anticipated that the majority would say, yes. However, to my surprise, the percentages were equal. Due to that surprise of the aforementioned results, I became very curious about the Florida Highway Patrol respondents and immediately reviewed their results. I anticipated that FHP respondents would overwhelmingly say, yes. Again, surprisingly, their ‘yes’ responses were only slightly more than the other responses. The next question asked, “Do you believe a properly designed and administered Promotional Assessment Center process can identify and select the best leaders?” rendered the same response pattern. The Senior Leadership Program Class #12 respondents were equal; and the FHP respondents were only slightly more. After I thought about the many discussions I held with many of the respondents, especially, Senior Leadership Class #12, I can somewhat understand what influenced these unpredictable responses. The one common element that was always discussed was the unavoidable human factor that they believe will always influence promotional systems, no matter which system is used.

As indicated earlier, law enforcement has the tendency to evolve slowly as evident by the use of the many diluted versions of assessment center components and various other traditional testing strategies for promotion. However, when you look at any agency around the nation, you will find that the core of their policy / procedures manuals is almost identical because of the many influences that mandated changes, such as Accreditation Guidelines. But when I evaluated the information from the

respondents it revealed that only a few agencies used similar promotional systems. I believe that some of the same outside influences that made our policies / procedures almost identical, such as Equal Opportunity, Civil Rights, and Discrimination laws, will eventually mandate more uniform promotional systems, especially with law enforcement being part of government. When approximately one half of all respondents do not believe a properly designed and administered promotional process can eliminate unfair practices or can identify and select the best leaders, this was very alarming to me. Where are we going wrong with our promotional systems that law enforcement, as a whole, doesn't use more uniform or modern promotional processes? I have heard often that the sergeants' rank is the backbone of an organization and leadership is critical because that level is where the work is accomplished. However, when it comes to agency top officials, all too often when something goes wrong, the leadership ability of those top officials are usually questioned. So, which is the most important position that is most critical of an organization? Apparently, every supervisory position is critical and therefore extreme attention should be given to identification, development, and selection of all the agency's leaders. How can this be accomplished, whereby agency heads still maintain control, the promotional process is legally acceptable, and any rank can be evaluated? Until law enforcement finds a better tool, it appears that an Assessment Center process is the most researched, recognized, modern, and accepted system available to modern law enforcement. Unfortunately, we are refusing to use a tool that can help us evolve past traditional methods that often keep us behind future trends of society.

Extremely important to my project was the openness of the respondents. When I think about our country's state of existence with the emergence of Homeland Security matters, the many deaths associated with motor vehicle traffic crashes, and the many domestic crimes occurring, to name a few, my mind moves to law enforcement as the defender, the peace keeper, and the leaders to protect all. So, I have wondered, with such of a great responsibility to society and throughout my career, why law enforcement have not evolved with the rest of society by not applying a better mechanism that can identify develop, and select the best leaders. Private companies put forth maximum efforts to find the best leaders to lead them into the future by paying corporate heads top dollar with great benefits. To these companies a great leader means great profit, job security, and the companies' very existence. Great leaders for law enforcement, not only impacts every aspect important to these companies' but, most of all, it impacts our very existence as a nation. Does law enforcement put forth maximum efforts to identify and develop its future leaders? Literature and data collected indicate the assessment Center process used as a promotional process system can be the best system. Even though an agency chooses an Assessment Center process, there still will be a culture that believes the system will be biased. Data collected through both of the surveys indicated that approximately half of the respondents believed and approximately half of the respondents did not believe that an Assessment Center process could rid an agency of unfair promotional practices or identify the best leaders. To change the culture of law enforcement officers will not be easy, partly because of the very suspicious nature officers develop by being in the profession; however, history has shown that change will always have resistance. So, with time, the education of Assessment Center processes,

and the commitment of an agency's leadership, the resistance to change should occur more rapidly.

Recommendations

My recommendations are based on the research evaluated by reviewing various documentations, information from surveys, and formal discussions from middle management law enforcement officers from the Senior Leadership Program Class #12.

- There should be a clearly written and established promotional policy for all law enforcement agencies.
- Encourage each agency to create a task force to research, develop and implement a modern promotional system.
- Accreditation / CALEA should require a more modern and uniform promotional system standard.
- Inter-agency Bargaining Unit representatives should become more aware of the modern promotional practices.

Major Timothy J. Ashley has been with the Florida Highway Patrol since 1986. He has worked in various locations throughout the State of Florida to include Orlando, Ft. Lauderdale, Miami, Jacksonville, Panama City and Tallahassee. Tim currently is the Troop Commander for Troop H which encompasses eight counties in and around the Tallahassee area.

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APPENDIX A

The twenty-seven law enforcement agencies are:

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 Department of Transportation – MCCO	Palm Bay Police Department
Florida Fish & Wildlife Conservation Commission	Panama City Police Department
Florida Highway Patrol	Pinellas County Sheriff's Office
Fort Pierce Police Department	Plantation Police Department
Hillsborough County Sheriff's Office	Polk County Sheriff's Office
Jacksonville Sheriff's Office	Santa Rosa County Sheriff's Office
Lakeland Police Department	St. Lucie County Sheriff's Office
	Volusia County Division of Corrections

APPENDIX B

My name is Captain Timothy J. Ashley with the Florida Highway Patrol. I currently enrolled in the Florida Criminal Justice Executive Institute Senior leadership Class #12 at Florida Department of Law Enforcement. As part of this class I am required to complete a research paper on a matter that effects law enforcement. I chose the subject of the Assessment Center process as it relates to identifying and selecting the best leaders for promotion.

I am asking for a few minutes of your time to complete an anonymous survey to help provide me with some information for my research paper. Attached is the survey, which can be returned by email or faxed to (850) 413-8362. Thank you in advance for your valuable time and assistance.

Promotional System Survey (Outside Agency Questionnaire)

1. Does your agency have a written promotional policy?
Yes___ No___ If no, disregard the survey.
2. Is an Assessment Center process part of your agency's promotional system?
Yes___ No___.
3. Approximately how many sworn officers are in your agency? ____
4. Do you work for a local, county, or state law enforcement agency?
5. Does your promotional policy include the following ranks? Check all that are applicable.
 - a. Cpl___
 - b. Sgt___
 - c. Lt.____
 - d. Capt.____
 - e. Major___
 - f. Other_____

6. For Lt. positions and above, does your agency's current promotional process utilize the following (check all that are applicable):
- a. personal interview_____
 - b. review of personnel file_____
 - c. yearly written standardized test_____
 - d. assessment center_____
 - e. internal oral review board_____
 - f. external oral review board_____
 - g. combination internal/external review board_____
 - h. other, please list_____
7. How many promotional processes have you participated in for your current agency?
- a. None___
 - b. 1-3___
 - c. 4-6___
 - d. 7-9___
 - e. 10 or more_____
8. If there was a promotional process that you did not participate in, list the reasons?
- a. Too Much Responsibility With The Position_____
 - b. Required To Move_____
 - c. Not Enough Promotional Pay Increase_____
 - d. Did Not Think The Process Was Fair_____
 - e. Did Not Think The Process Was Impartial_____
 - f. Did Not Want To Loose Overtime Pay_____
9. Do you believe a yearly written standardized efficiency test should be part of a promotional process for the following positions (check all that apply)?
- a. Cpl._____
 - b. Sgt._____
 - c. Lt._____
 - d. Capt._____
 - e. Major_____
 - f. Other, please list_____

10. Do you believe that the following should be used for promotions of ranks from Lt. and above (check all that apply)?
- a. personal interview_____
 - b. review of personnel file_____
 - c. internal oral review board_____
 - d. external oral review board_____
 - e. combination of internal/external oral review board_____
 - f. assessment center using external personnel_____
 - g. written testing_____
11. What is your current rank?
- a. Officer/Trooper_____
 - b. Cpl._____
 - c. Sgt._____
 - d. Lt._____
 - e. Capt._____
 - f. Major_____
 - g. Above Major_____
12. How many years have you been with your current agency?
- a. 1-5_____
 - b. 6-10_____
 - c. 11-15_____
 - d. 16-20_____
 - e. More than 20_____
13. How many years have you been in law enforcement total?
- a. 1-5_____
 - b. 6-10_____
 - c. 11-15_____
 - d. 16-20_____
 - e. More than 20_____
14. Do you believe a properly designed and administered Promotional Assessment Center process can rid your agency of real or perceived unfair promotion practices? Yes___ No___
15. Do you believe a properly designed and administered Promotional Assessment Center process can identify and select the best leaders? Yes___ No___

APPENDIX C
(FHP Questionnaire)

1. How many promotional processes have you participated in for your current agency?
 - a. 1-3_____
 - b. 4-6_____
 - c. 7-9_____
 - d. 10 or More
 - e. None

2. If there was a promotional process that you did not participate in, list the reasons?
 - a. Required to Move
 - b. Too Much Responsibility With The Position
 - c. Not Enough Promotional Pay Increase
 - d. Did Not Think The Process Was Fair
 - e. Did Not Think The Process Was Impartial
 - f. Did Not Want To Loose Overtime Pay

3. Do you believe a yearly written standardized efficiency test should be part of a promotional process for the following positions (check all that apply)?
 - a. Cpl._____
 - b. Sgt._____
 - c. Lt._____
 - d. Capt._____
 - e. Major_____
 - f. Other, please list_____

4. Do you believe that the following should be used for promotions of ranks from Lt. and above (check all that apply)?
 - a. personal interview_____
 - b. review of personnel file_____
 - c. internal oral review board_____
 - d. external oral review board_____
 - e. combination of internal/external oral review board_____
 - f. assessment center using external personnel_____

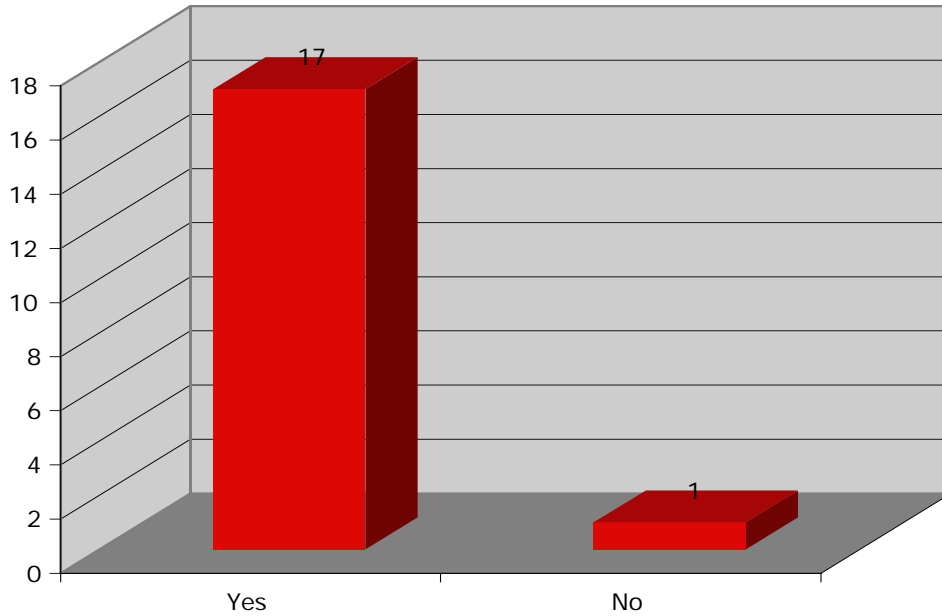
- g. written testing____
5. What is your current rank?
- a. Officer/Trooper____
 - b. Cpl.____
 - c. Sgt.____
 - d. Lt.____
 - e. Capt.____
 - f. Major____
 - g. Above Major____
6. How many years have you been with your current agency?
- a. 1-5____
 - b. 6-10____
 - c. 11-15____
 - d. 16-20____
 - e. More than 20____
7. How many years have you been in law enforcement total?
- a. 1-5____
 - b. 6-10____
 - c. 11-15____
 - d. 16-20____
 - e. More than 20____
8. Do you believe a properly designed and administered Promotional Assessment Center process can rid your agency of real or perceived unfair promotion practices? Yes____
No____
9. Do you believe a properly designed and administered Promotional Assessment Center process can identify and select the best leaders? Yes____ No____

APPENDIX D

(Outside Agency Questionnaire Results)

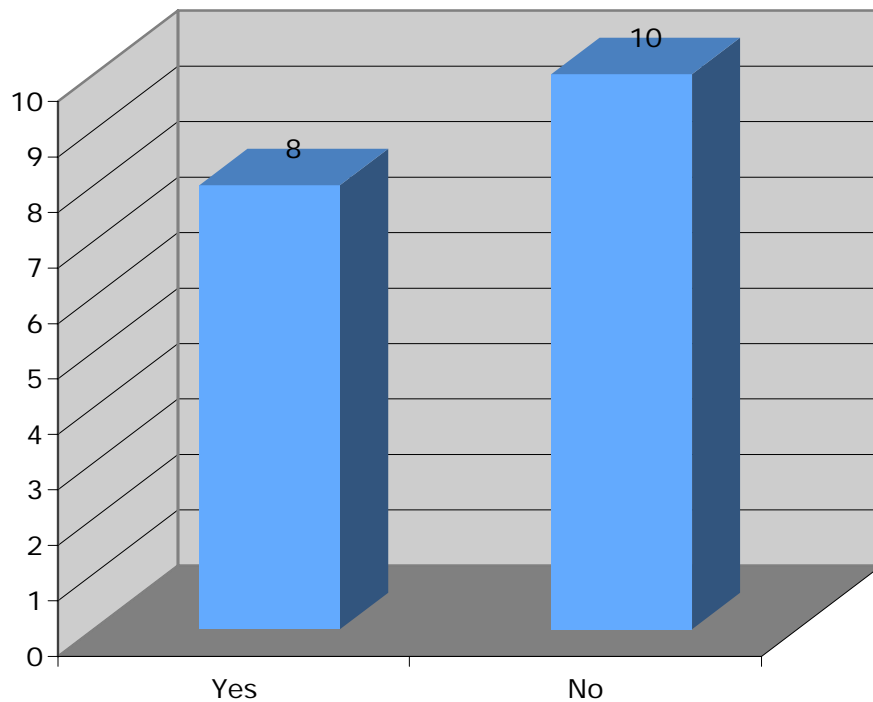
Question #1

Does your agency have a written promotional policy?



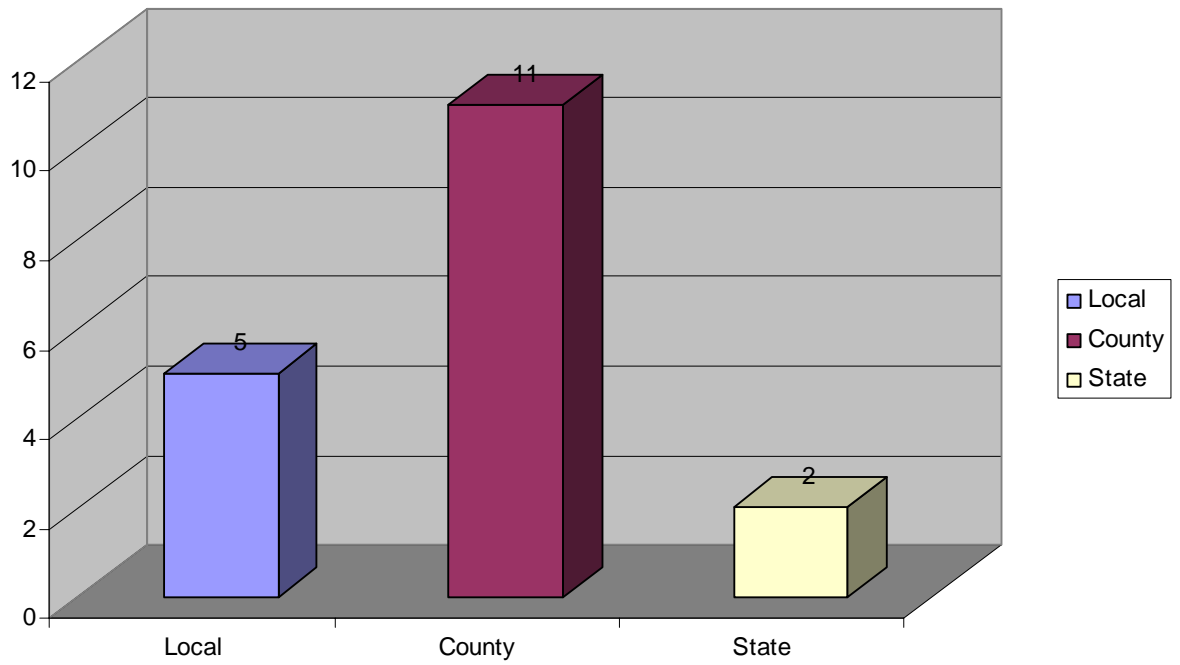
Question #2

Is An Assessment Center Process Part of Your Agency's Promotional System?



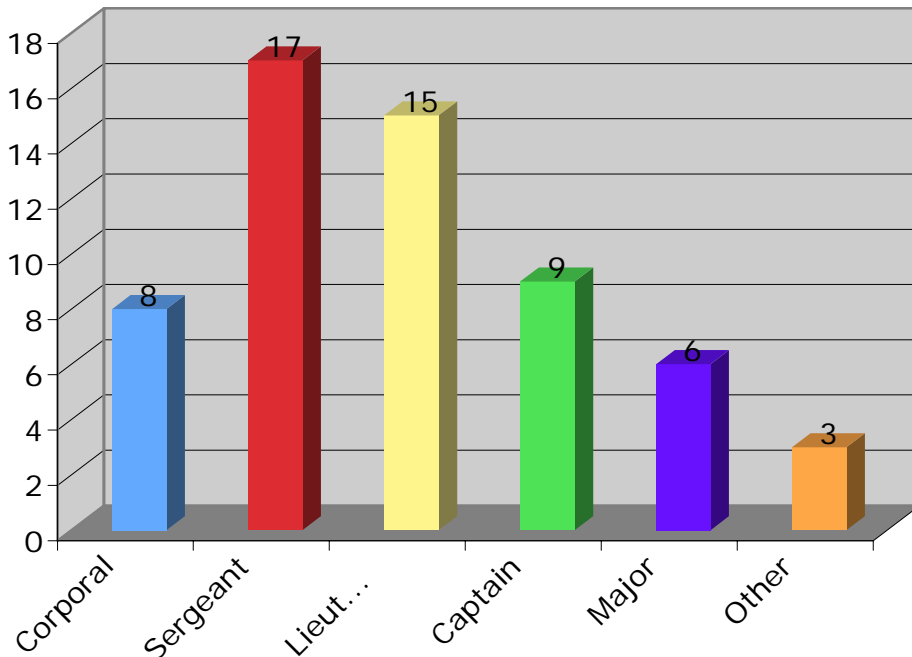
Question #4

Do You Work For a Local, County or State Law Enforcement Agency?



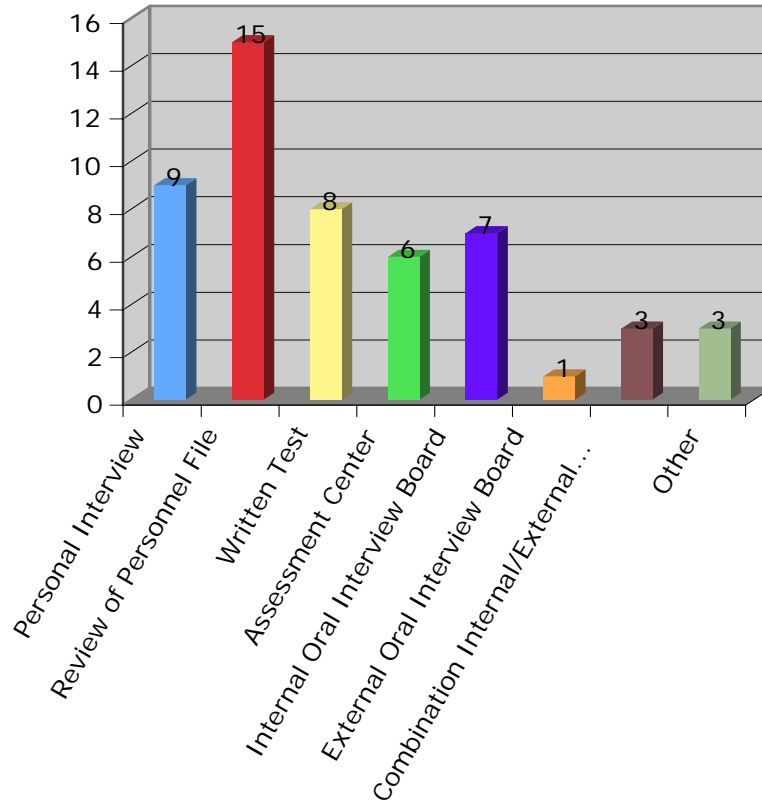
Question #5

Does Your Promotional Policy Include The Following Ranks?
(Check All That Are Applicable)



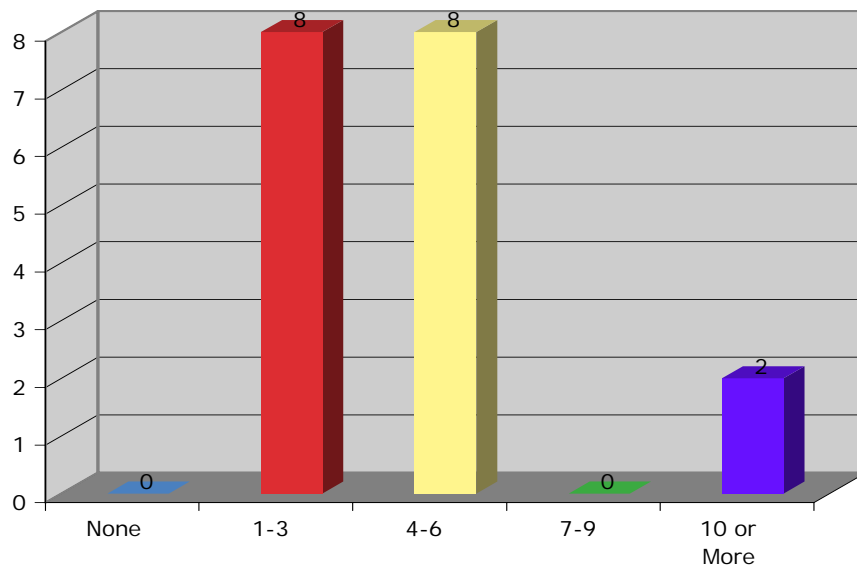
Question #6

For Lieutenants Positions and Above, Does Your Agency's Current Promotional Process Utilize The Following?
(Check All That Are Applicable)



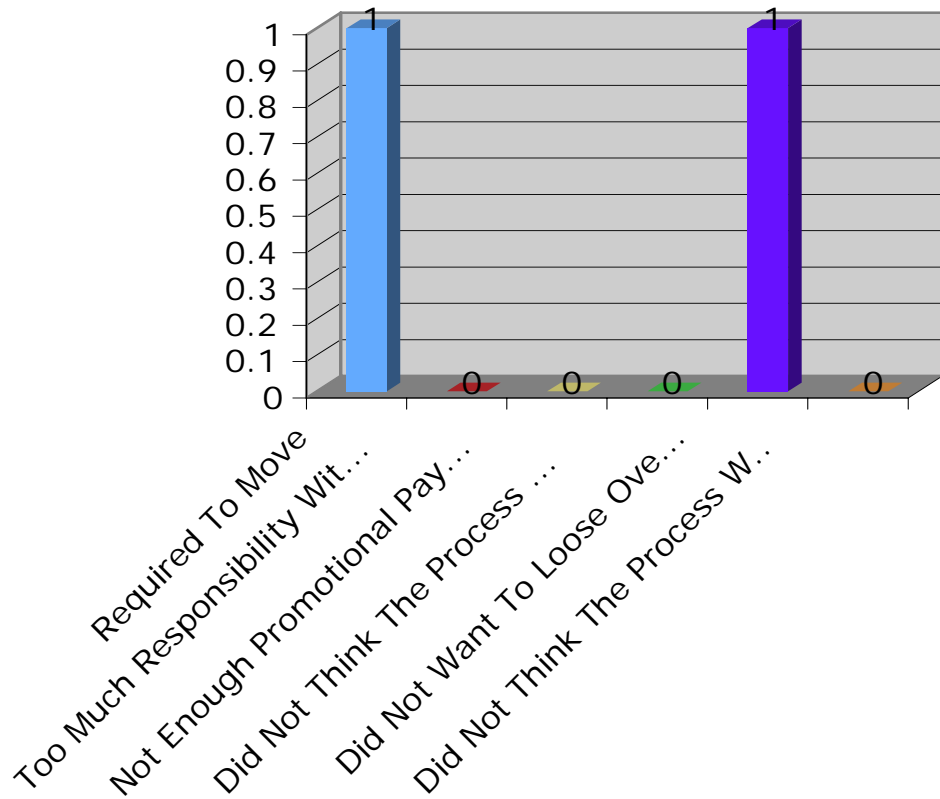
Question #7

How Many Promotional Processes Have You Participated In?



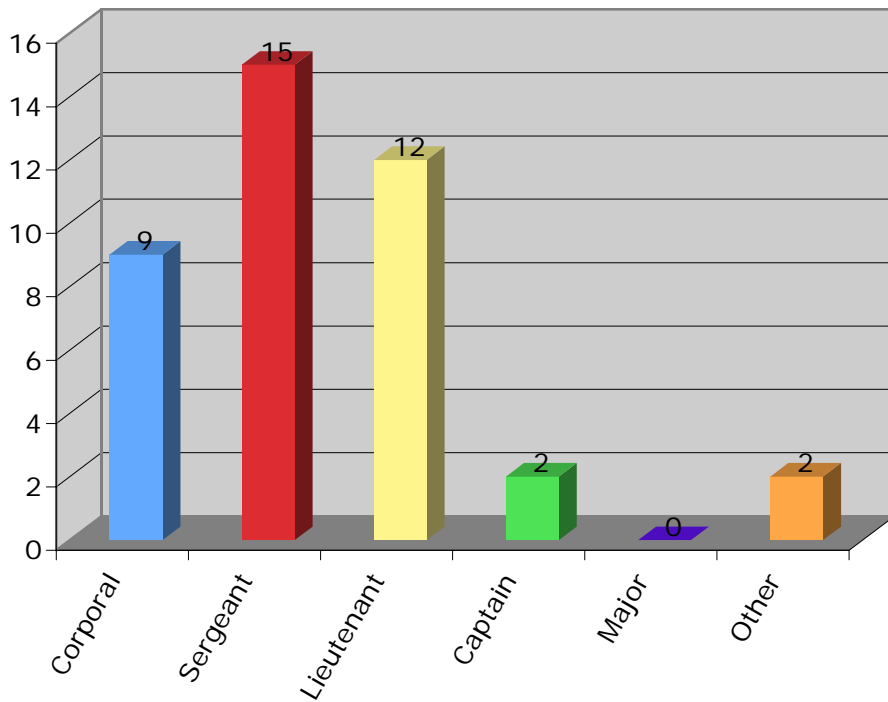
Question #8

If There Was a Promotional Process That You Did Not Participate In, List the Reasons?



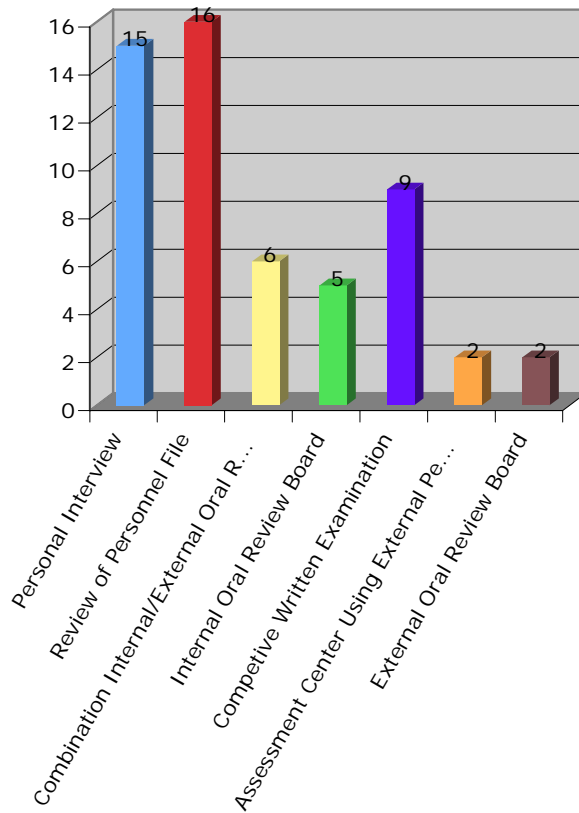
Question #9

Do You Believe an Annual Competitive Written Examination Should Be A Part of A Promotional Process for the Following Positions?
(Check all that Apply)



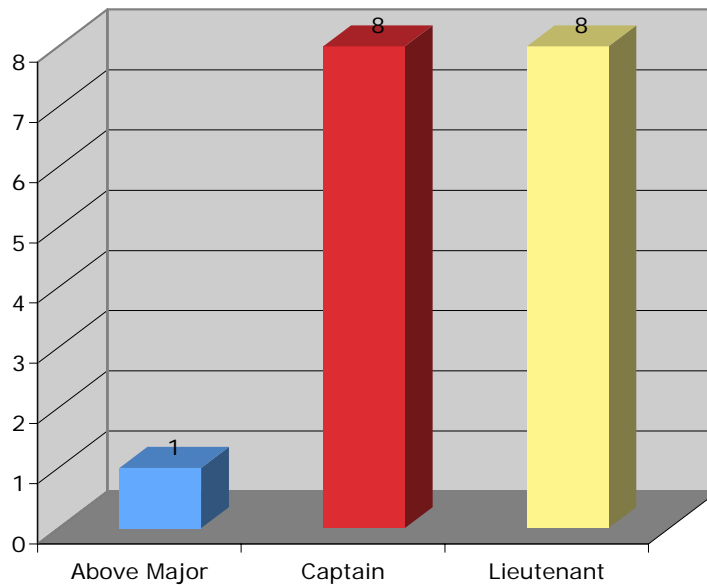
Question #10

Do You Believe An Annual Competitive Written Examination Should Be A Part Of A Promotional Process For Promotions To The Ranks of Lieutenant and Above?
(Chart Indicates Yes Responses)



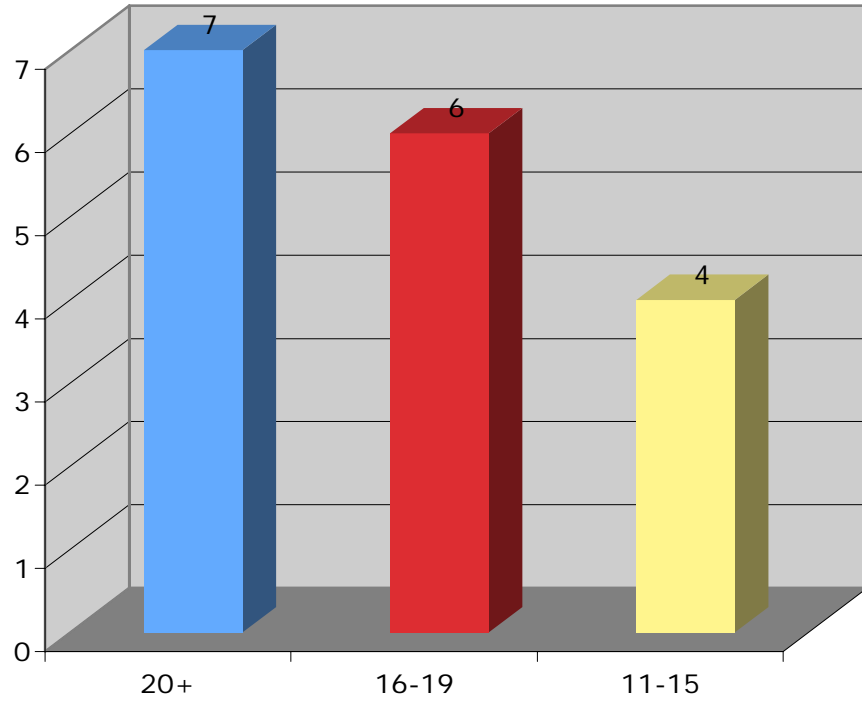
Question #11

What is Your Current Rank?



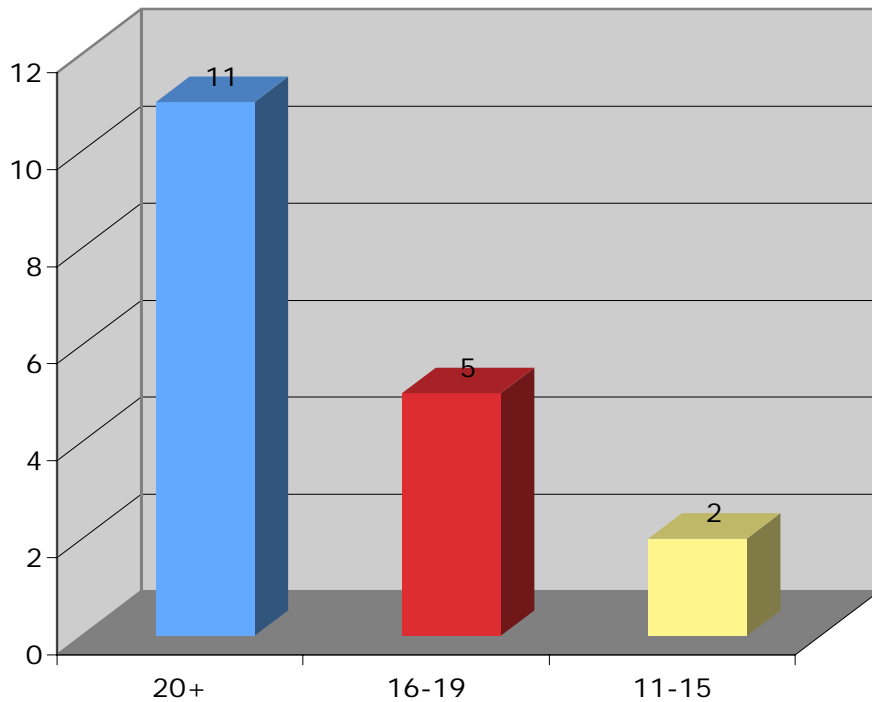
Question #12

How Many Years Have You Been With Your Current Agency?



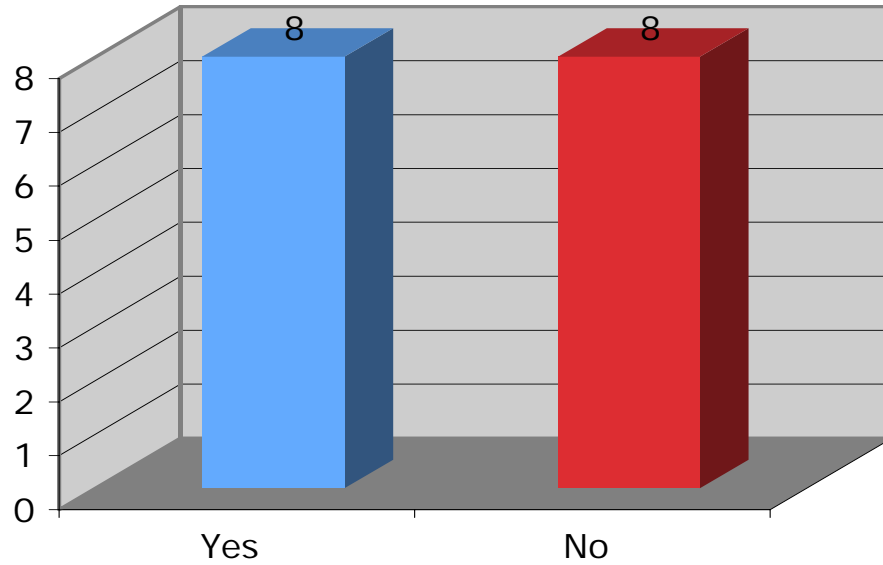
Question #13

How Many Years Have You Been In Law Enforcement?



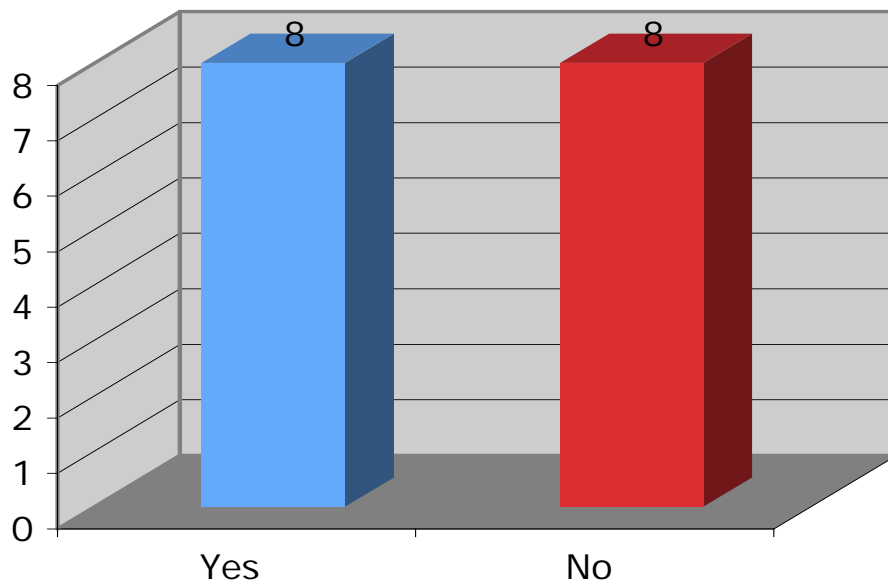
Question #14

Do you believe a properly designed and administered Promotional Assessment Center process can rid your agency of real or perceived unfair promotion practices?



Question #15

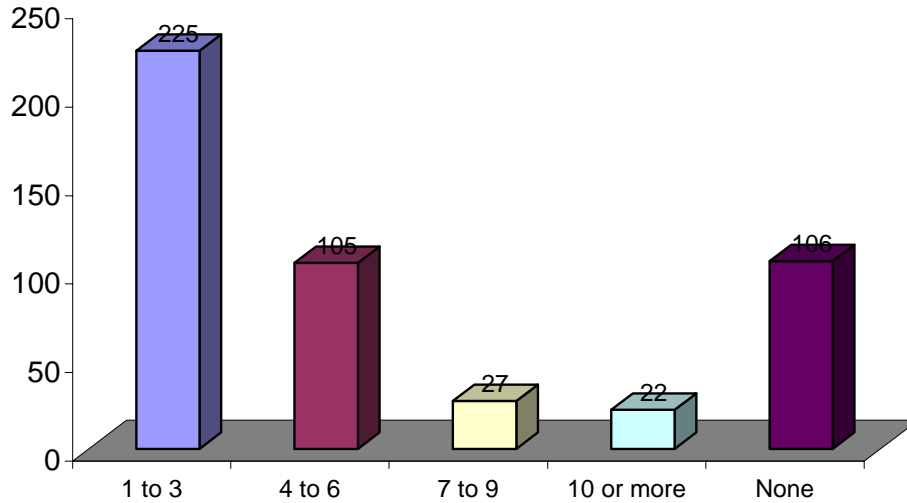
Do you believe a properly designed and administered Promotional Assessment Center process can identify and select the best leaders?



APPENDIX E
(FHP Questionnaire)

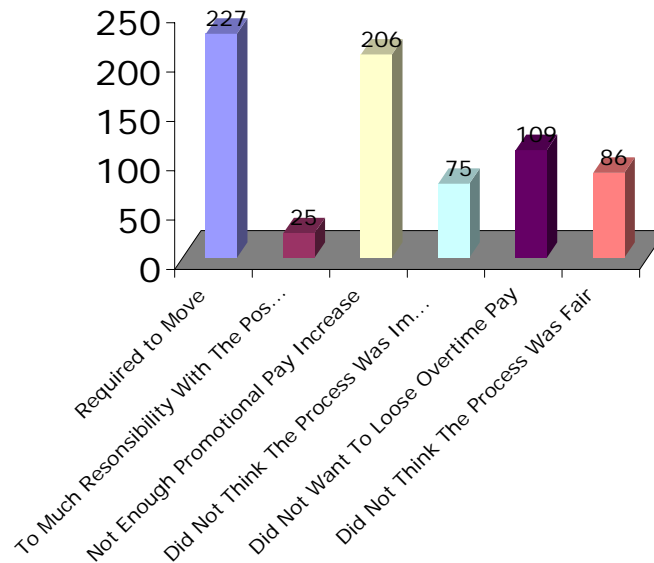
Question #1

How many promotional processes have you participated in for your current agency?



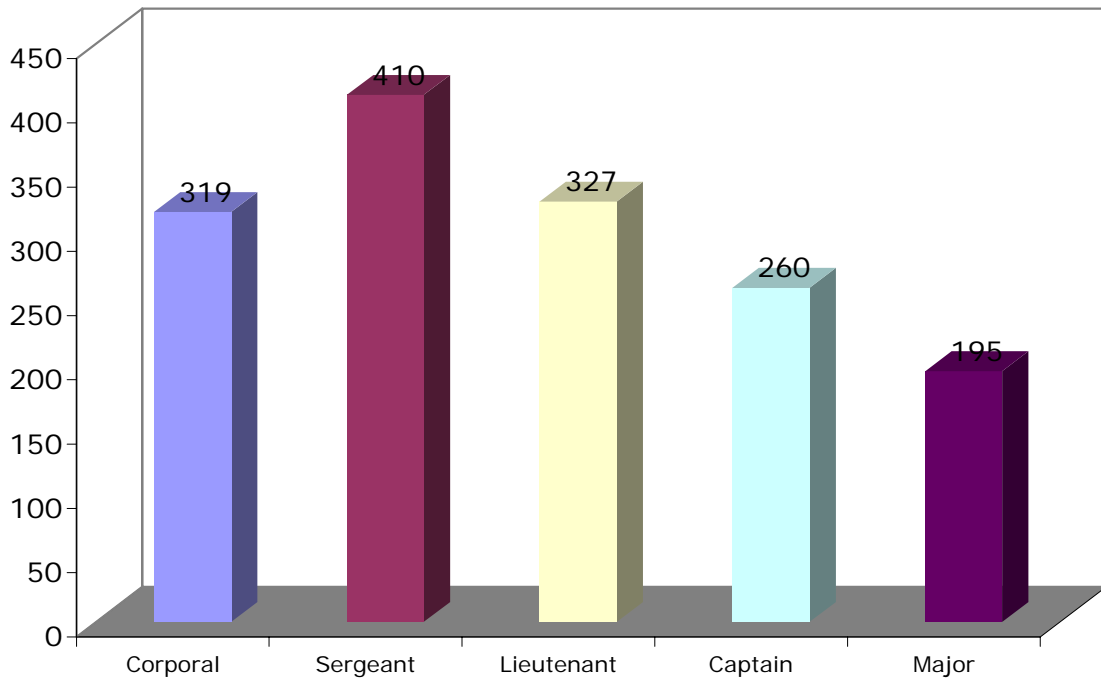
Question #2

If there was a promotional process that you did not participate in, list the reasons?



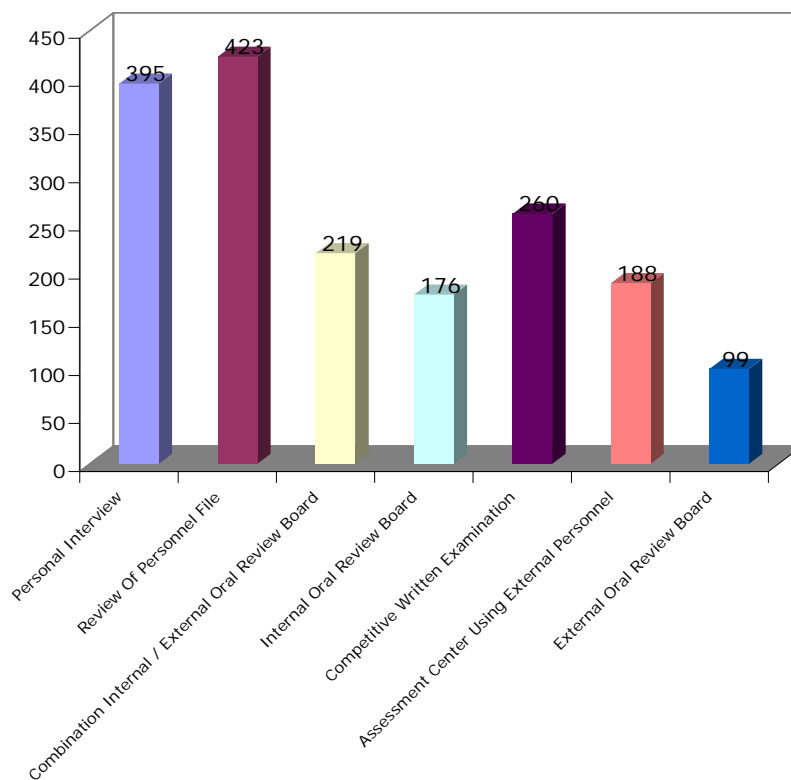
Question #3

10. Do you believe a yearly written standardized efficiency test should be part of a promotional process for the following positions (check all that apply)?



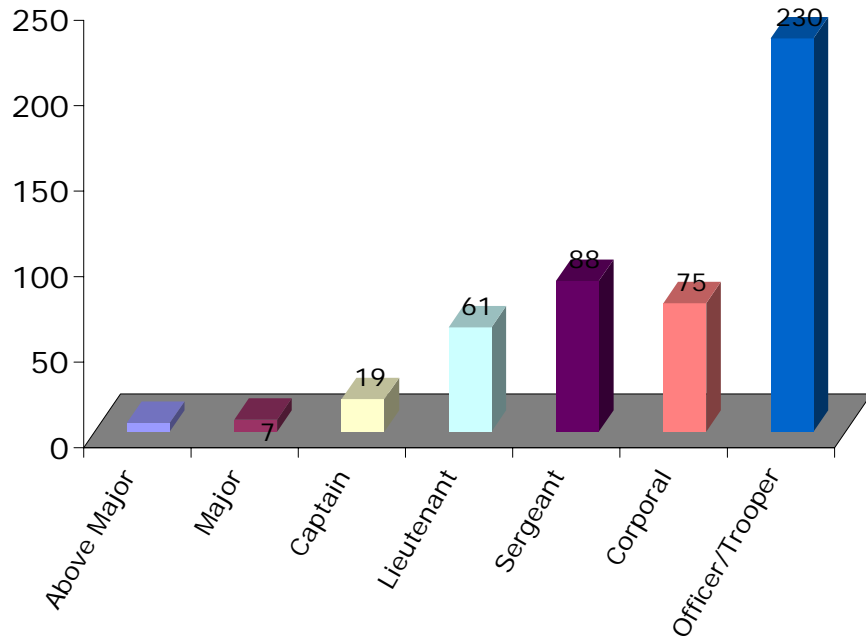
Question #4

11. Do you believe that the following should be used for promotions of ranks from Lt. and above (check all that apply)?



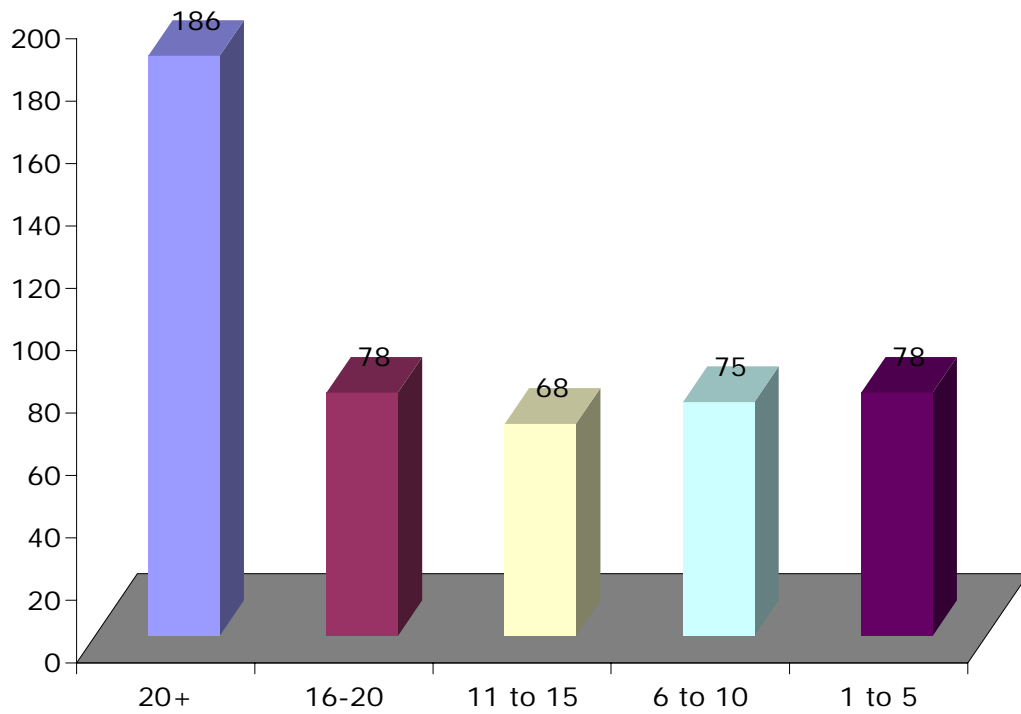
Question #5

12. What is your current rank?



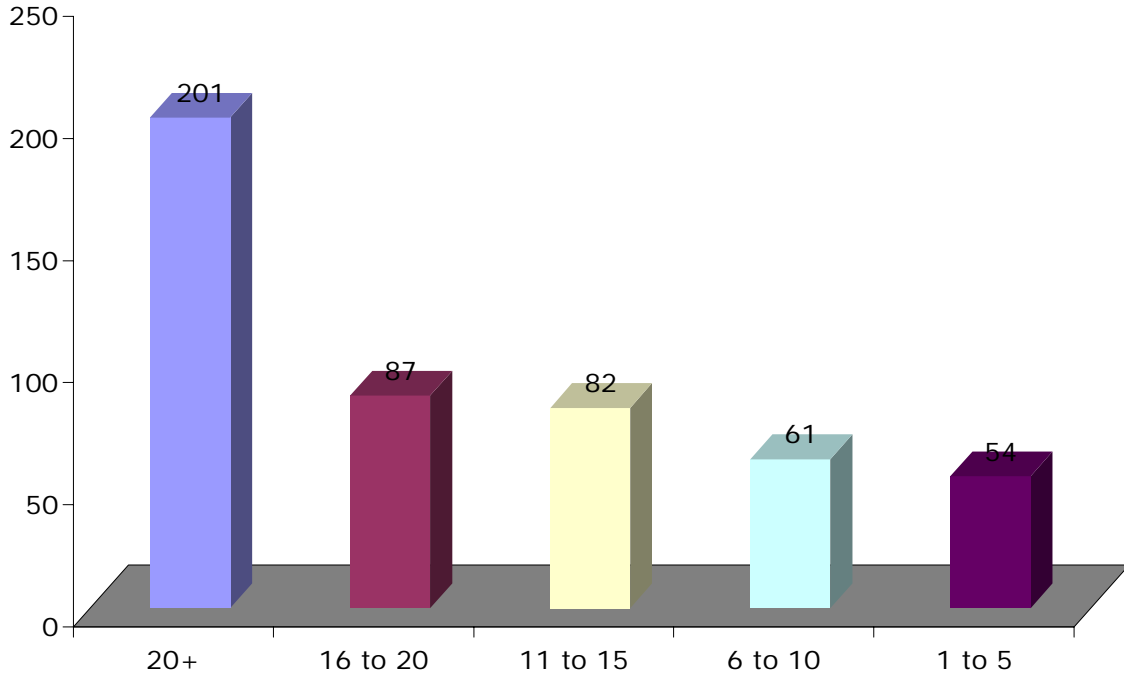
Question #6

13. How Many Years Have You Been With The Patrol?



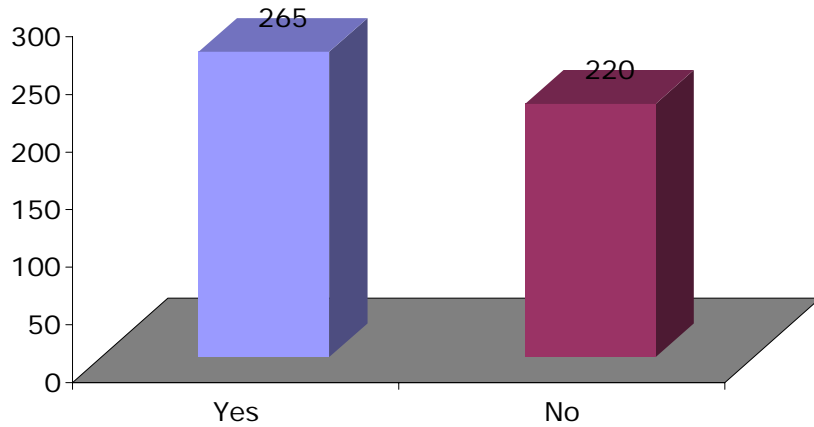
Question #7

14. How many years have you been in law enforcement total?



Question #8

15. Do you believe a properly designed and administered Promotional Assessment Center process can rid your agency of real or perceived unfair promotion practices?



Question #9

16. Do you believe a properly designed and administered Promotional Assessment Center process can identify and select the best leaders?

