

**Leadership Development and Succession Planning**

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National Command and Staff College, Session #005

October 2019

### **Abstract**

Succession planning and staff development is a critical leadership tool for ensuring organizational growth and staff development while eliminating gaps in institutional knowledge, culture, and leadership. Succession planning and staff development will help organizations maintain the continuity of the organizational mission both internally and externally while preparing our future leaders for tomorrow. This planning and forward thinking can help reduce the uncertainty and resistance to change. This paper will cover the importance and benefits of well thought out succession plans and staff development programs are to both the organization and staff. We will analyze the problems with no succession or staff development plans and adverse impacts on the organization and staff. Finally, we will explore some ideas for training and development plans for each rank of officer to prepare them for the next step, mentoring ideas, and overall support from senior leadership. This process can allow our potential leaders a successful process to develop their skills and confidence, which in turn will greatly affect the morale of the entire organization.

### **Leadership Development and Succession Planning**

The law enforcement environment is rapidly changing. Today, law enforcement agencies are under increased scrutiny from the public who has higher expectations for transparency and professionalism. In addition, law enforcement agencies must contend with greater and more complex threats; changing community dynamics, diversity, and expectations, new technology, social media, which creates instant community awareness of events across the world, etc. In short, law enforcement is dealing with increasing complex situations while being under the proverbial microscope. Under these changing circumstances, credible and effective police leadership is more important than ever. However, law enforcement agencies have traditionally been ineffective at developing leadership within the organization. Internally, agencies have traditionally done a very good job developing technical and tactical skills, such as firearms, driving, arrest control, tactical movement, etc., but spend little to no time developing leadership skills. The skills needed by today's modern law enforcement officers and supervisors have grown beyond the technical and tactical skills needed for typical law enforcement duties and staff need leadership skills to deal with the ever-increasing complexities of today's environment. Specifically, "Leaders need not only the traditional technical and managerial skills of the past but also well-honed transformational competencies emphasizing mission articulation, vision, and inspirational motivation" (Trottier, Van Wart, & Wang, 2008, p.330).

In many ways, the failure of law enforcement agencies to adequately emphasize leadership training is detrimental to their staff, agencies, and the communities they serve. By emphasizing leadership training along with a mindset valuing continual learning and development, agencies can not only greatly influence the quality of their relationships, level of service, and ultimately the agency culture, leading to higher quality, more proficient employees

and enabling organizations to effectively develop succession plans that will enable the culture to continually embolden credible leaders who will leave a lasting positive legacy for their agency and the law enforcement profession.

The curriculum components of the well-established and nationally known law enforcement training programs of the Federal Bureau of Investigations National Academy (FBINA, 2019) and the Northwestern University Center for Public Safety (NUCPS, 2019) primarily place educational emphasis on a management and operations-centered curriculum that includes areas such as budgeting, grant writing, problem solving, human resources, and project management. While these are all valuable administrative skills necessary for any Officer to be successful in an executive role, these programs still fail to place sufficient emphasis on development in the various areas of leadership. Because of this, significant opportunities are missed in areas critical to not only individual career success, but in developing subordinates and preparing the next generation of Officers to lead within agencies.

The hallmark personal qualities of great leaders include knowledge, loyalty, humility, honesty, sincerity, courage, intelligence, impartiality, and kindness (Normore, A.H., Javidi, M., et. al., 2014). While some of the common skills-based training areas previously discussed might have some carry-over into the leadership characteristics of knowledge, many other areas go undeveloped and result in staff failing to realize their full potential.

At its most basic level, leadership training provides students with the knowledge, tools, and confidence to influence others to lead themselves and others in a positive direction based on individual or group goals. At more advanced levels, leadership training helps students have a more globalized outward impact on those around them in profound ways, such as building and establishing cultures of influence that have a domino-like effect wherein the leadership skills of

an individual is passed along via influence, developing leadership within others and outward through the agency and even into the communities they serve and even into the personal lives of the officers, making for better quality of life.

Possession of strong leadership skills allows individuals to connect effectively on interpersonal levels with individuals and teams opens the door for officers to be better project managers, trainers, facilitators, supervisors, collaborators, and influencers – skills that carry weight in nearly all areas of professional employment and work. Some areas of benefit that are offered in leadership development programs, but lack in the aforementioned management-focused programs encompass many areas that benefit individuals not only involved in law enforcement, but also private industry and include such areas as conflict management, self-management, interpersonal communications, team and organizational development, and emotional intelligence.

It has been argued by some leaders are born, not made, but it is now widely recognized that leadership is a skill that some naturally possess more than others, but is also a skill that anyone can develop if they chose to do so. In addition to influence, a key skill of effective leaders is the ability to influence others. Sinek (2011) states, “There are a few leaders who chose to inspire rather than manipulate in order to motivate people” (p. 37). The ability to effectively inspire a group to achieve a goal was put eloquently by former Army General and US President Dwight D. Eisenhower: “Leadership is the art of getting someone else to do something you want done because he wants to do it.”

The idea that any person can be developed into an effective leader is the very reason that all agencies should work to compose leadership development and succession plans unique to

their own organizations. Doing so only requires investment of time and resources that will pay positive dividends for the future.

### **Professional Experiences and Observations**

In addition to the challenges created by the ever-increasing complexity of the law enforcement environment and our lack of providing adequate leadership development, we are losing our senior leaders as the baby boomers are aging out of the workforce. Considering all these factors, it is more important than ever for law enforcement agencies to focus on leadership development as a part of succession planning and management. According to Lieutenant Colonel Wellington R. Scott (2017), succession planning is an ongoing process of systematically identifying, assessing and developing leadership talent within an organization to meet future organizational strategic and operational needs. Simply put, succession planning a strategy for identifying and developing future leaders at your agency. Succession planning not only provides a plan for replacing leaders, it creates a positive impact on employees as well. Specifically, “effective succession planning has advantages for your staff members, by giving them a self-esteem boost and an answer to the question of what’s next for them. For managers and employers, it’s a proactive measure that gives them an alignment of talent development with the company’s future leadership needs” (Half, 2018, para. 2). According to a recent study, employees who believe they are being developed for leadership roles have increased drive and job satisfaction. Specifically, the study revealed “that when high potentials are aware of their status, they are motivated to continue developing and performing, positively driving behavior; with 96% of respondents agreeing that they are motivated by their jobs” (Zhu & Manjarrez, 2017, p. 149).

Collectively, the authors of this paper possess 76 years of sworn law enforcement experience within various levels of the criminal justice system at the state, county, and municipal levels. Historically, experience has shown that staff have been promoted based on their knowledge, experience, and technical and tactical skill sets. Up until recently, little to no emphasis was placed on leadership skills and abilities. Furthermore, once staff was promoted, they were simply placed into their new roles and expected to “learn on the fly,” getting little or no enrichment in supervisory or leadership training. If any advanced-level training was offered, it would likely be in the skills-based areas previously discussed and tended to provide guidance on processes and minimization of liability in such areas as progressive discipline and documentation, FMLA (Family and Medical Leave Act), time management and scheduling, etc.

Some training in regard to interpersonal skills and communication was offered, but it was more focused on streamlining completion of tasks rather than motivating, empowering, and influencing individuals and teams. The negative aspects of lacking leadership training were evident and memorable in many cases. Staff were exposed to inept or toxic leadership examples who were ineffective in their supervisory, management, or executive level roles due to, among many things, their inability to effectively relate to, motivate, and develop their subordinate staff.

This resulted in agencies providing suboptimal law enforcement services to their communities, dealing with the expenses of high turnover rates, and suffering the effects of increased liabilities due to staff misconduct, deviation from accepted practices, and perpetuating poor relationships with their citizens, partly contributing to negative stereotypes of law enforcement and reducing effectiveness in combating local problems and concerns.

Furthermore, the lack of leadership development would lead to internal voids of experience and qualification during times when promotions were needed due to either expansion,

retirement, or attrition. Situations like this are not only detrimental to the agencies, but also to the morale of staff, who, if inadequately offered opportunities for development, are likely to feel undervalued. The negative costs of failing to develop leadership skills is real and far-reaching.

### **Leadership Development Plan**

As an effective leader within an organization, it is important to identify future leaders and assist them with their professional development in order to become more well-rounded and fall within the boundaries of succession planning. There is a distinct separation between managers and leaders. A manager is more of an individual who deals with the day to day activities of an organization, where as a leader is an individual who takes command of a group or an organization with the intent of pushing the organization forward towards the future.

Leaders exhibit the virtues of truthfulness, integrity, honor, nobility, humility, faithfulness, respect, responsibility, prudence, gratitude, shared vision, shared leadership, being a catalyst for progress, and health (Hoina, Learning Area 1, Module 1). These types of leaders are considered magnanimous leaders, or MAGNUS.

The four distinct MAGNUS behaviors are observation (perception of what is really going on), listening carefully to what people say, learning (continuously learn, pick up a book, experience something new, push your limits a bit, stretch your comfort levels increases capabilities and adds to the quality of life, sign up for classes to continue your education), acting (in the end you must act, start small but commit, do something to improve).

To become a successful MAGNUS leader, each individual must be properly developed with professional skills that align within the MAGNUS virtues. A successful leadership development plan will incorporate strategies for proper development such as goal setting, and future planning. To further illustrate this, each position within a typical police organization was



identified and future developmental training areas were identified for each position. In order to be set up for success when the next promotional opportunity was available, the training areas would need to be completed. By completing the areas prior to advancement, the individual is being set up for success in their next challenge and not setup for failure which happens in a lot of cases.

Looking at the line level Officer or Deputy, we need to focus our attention on building their confidence and ensuring that they reach their true potential. These individuals' goals should include development programs such as being a field training officer, attending train the trainer, take the DISC assessment, and the leader FISH program. These basic level opportunities are instrumental in planting the seed for future leadership development opportunities.

At this point, the line level Officer or Deputy has met the criteria for advancement. They are now promoted to the rank of Corporal. Helping the Corporal prepare for the next promotion opportunity we look at the next set of goals. These goals can be anything from becoming a coach or mentor, attending a line level supervision course, learning about critical incident management and responses to these events, and being involved in the decision-making process with units in the field.

The Corporal gets promoted and becomes a Sergeant. The Sergeant wishes to continue their personal development for growth within the agency. The Sergeant identifies that the next set of goals to accomplish are attending a command staff institute, supervisor leadership institute through FBI LEEDA, learning the basic functions of incident command (NIMS / ICS), and emotional intelligence, and continued learning through a college institution.

Now the Sergeant has been promoted to the rank of Lieutenant. The Lieutenant in most cases becomes a member of the command staff within many organizations. The Lieutenant

should be given training opportunities that focus on administrative aspects of the job since the position in most cases is administrative in nature. Such areas as command leadership through FBI LEEDA, leadership in police organizations, internal affairs, records and retention, NIBER's, public affairs, and attending resident incident command courses (ICS 300, ICS 400, Command and Control).

Once a Lieutenant promotes, the positions that are available are generally agency specific. Some agencies have captains, majors, watch commanders, deputy chiefs, under sheriff's and so on. In many cases, these positions are direct routes to opportunities to become the chief or sheriff of the organization. The leadership development of these individuals should focus on executive leadership institute, FBI National Academy, senior management institute for police, chief executive leadership, financial management, and public speaking.

### **Conclusion**

Inadequate leadership development within agencies has proven to lead to poor organizational performance results that carry over to other areas including organizational planning. Astute executive staff within agencies would be well-served by developing a systematic, progressive leadership development plan and implementing that plan to most effectively achieve the short and long-term goals of their organizations, better serving each other and their communities.

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