

**The Bill Blackwood
Law Enforcement Management Institute of Texas**

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Just In Time Support

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By

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ABSTRACT

The author joined the San Antonio Police Department fifteen years ago when only word processors and the “mainframe” were used as main sources of technology.

Detectives wrote reports on the system within the follow up units but technology training was non-existent for patrolmen and the training that was offered to detectives and higher ranks was very limited. The department has since advanced in technology training and currently teaches Introduction to Windows 98/PC, Word 97, Excel 97, Access 97, and Power Point 97. Time frames for classes are offered to officers on and off duty.

Technology training and human resource skills must be promoted and encouraged. Police officers must gain the necessary skills in the use of the latest cutting edge technological systems in order to enable them to be functional and productive in today’s competitive society. Human resource skills necessary to establish communication can boost positive morale and renew the officer’s spirit in order to motivate them to accomplish the department’s missions and goals. Some of the human resource skills include: study groups, technology coaches, workplace visits, and teambuilding practices.

This proposal plans to promote, cultivate and encourage a learning environment or rather, a “Continuous Learning Organization”. Technology and human resource skills must be honed and perfected by each officer and the department. Necessary skills must be assessed, implementation of training programs for professional growth and development must be designed and “after training” follow ups with evaluations and surveys must be performed in order to measure the success of the programs.

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INTRODUCTION

The author joined the San Antonio Police Department fifteen years ago. At that time, the department was operating on word processors and the “mainframe”. The word processor was utilized for memos within the department. Detectives wrote reports on the system within the follow up units. The system was also used to update policies and procedures. The “mainframe” is mainly utilized by dispatchers, service agents, detectives, sergeants and higher ranking officers. On a daily basis, the mainframe is utilized to look up calls, dispatch calls, follow up on calls, look up suspect information, clear calls and generate reports on the system. The two major functions of the mainframe would include:

“The National Crime Information Center (NCIC) is a nationwide computerized information system established as a service to all criminal justice agencies: local state and federal. The goal of NCIC is to help the criminal justice community perform its duties by providing and maintaining a computerized filing system of accurate and timely documented criminal justice information readily available to all criminal justice agencies.” (Gavin, 1)

“The Texas Crime Information Center (TCIC), located at the Texas Department of Public Safety (DPS) headquarters in Austin, Texas, is a statewide information database. TCIC operates under the same policies and guidelines, with the same purposes and goals as NCIC.” (Gavin, 1)

Normally, regular patrol officers were not properly trained to use the system until they were promoted to the rank of detective. If patrol officers did not take the initiative to get promoted on their own they may never have been properly trained to use the system. The possibility exists that patrolmen could retire as “patrolmen” if they never find the motivation (within themselves) to take a promotional exam! When detectives were promoted, they attended a one week detective training session and received approximately four hours of word processing training. Many times a detective was

transferred to a narcotic or vice unit and was never exposed to the word processor again, thus never utilizing the few hours exposed to the minimal skills. Although it took the department an incredibly long time to get rid of the word processor, it is a positive thing that they fully replaced them with personal computers in 2000. However, now the officer must seek classes on a voluntary basis. The department currently teaches Windows 98/PC Intro., Word 97 Intro., Excel 97 Intro., Access 97 Intro., and Power Point 97 Intro. The Power Point class was just recently offered to the officers. It is a positive thing that the department has taken the initiative to offer computer classes, now the officers must take the initiative to take the classes. Time frames for classes are offered to officers on and off duty.

It appears that the department is attempting to “keep its head above the water” but with technology advancing so quickly, the author thinks a plan is necessary. The author had no clue where the department stood (technology and human resource skills wise) until she volunteered to participate in a LEMIT (Law Enforcement Management Institute of Texas) course offered by Sam Houston State University in 1997. It was there that she realized that other department officers were masters at presentation skills with the Power Point system and she noticed that most of the officers in her department were still making presentations with overhead slides. She learned that the El Paso Police Department and the San Antonio Bexar County Sheriff’s Department had fully implemented the video mugshot (or imaging) system and that the San Antonio Police Department did not get that program implemented until the year 2002!

The author did not know about team building skills until the department allowed her the opportunity to serve a three month special assignment as a “Loaned Executive” with the United Way program. The teams spent an entire day at a “ropes” training

course which involved many team building activities such as a rock climbing wall, ladders, rolling logs, the “tarzan swing” and various obstacles where the entire team had to join together, bond and help each other out in order to overcome the obstacles and succeed.

When the author began the Master’s program with the Webster University she had no idea what the Human Resource program was all about. Little did she know that she would take such interest in this field! She became intrigued and fascinated with the concept of the Human Resource Director’s role of enhancing and empowering employees and encouraging their professional development.

During the second semester of the Human Resource program she had a “lightbulb” moment when Shandler wrote that most of us are wondering why “Johnny can’t read” and that we needed to learn more about the education and training strategies of other “best-in-the world-practices.” Shandler indicates that:

Germany - This country has the world’s third largest economy and is the world’s largest exporter. There are several reason why:

- It has a highly organized and coordinated transition program to bridge the gap between school and the workplace
- It also has a multidimensional strategy for workplace training and development. (Shandler, 28)

The author realized then and began to see that some organizations just go through the “motions” to get their certifications or meet minimum standards every year but the individuals dread being in the classrooms because American society has not been disciplined, the “Continuous Learning Organization” has not existed from the very beginning.

When Region 20, Debby Hewitt made her presentation about team building in one of the author’s Human Resource classes, the author realized that the unit she

worked in would benefit greatly from various teambuilding skills that Ms. Hewitt presented. However, many supervisors have not been properly trained to successfully carry out such tasks. The author believes that she, as a fairly new supervisor, and many other supervisors yearn to acquire technology skills, leadership skills, teambuilding skills, etc., but many times have either not had the access to them or simply not known that they even existed. The author feels that it is time for the department to have mentors that teach officers and young supervisors how to be positive, well productive team players, team builders, leaders and competitive players with today's globalization.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The purpose of this paper is to outline a plan in that direction. It is a guide for officers to find the information they may need to further their education or find the knowledge they need to generate ideas that may lead to yet greater ones. This paper is a plan that may possibly promote, cultivate and encourage a learning environment or rather, a "Continuous Learning Organization"!

The best way to utilize new technology is to provide just in time support...assistance and encouragement when needed. Not tomorrow when there is a problem, not next week when there is time...but, **NOW!** If the San Antonio Police Department expects to see a solid return on its technology investments, they must foster a continuous learning environment and make changes immediately! Many resources will be necessary (most of them human) for the process to be successful. The implementation will be costly but integration of the program will be a challenge that will be all about a positive attitude, higher morale, a new spirit and continuous learning skills. Upper management must foster the philosophy of organizational and personal

growth while stimulating appetites for change within all levels of the department.

Integrating new technologies into the organization will require much skill and courage and will not be implemented successfully across the board unless safety measures such as surveys and follow-ups are planned, conducted and constantly monitored.

Professional growth, development and motivation are necessary on a daily basis.

(McKenzie)

When the Department spends money on different programs such as personal computers (software and hardware databases), video mugshot systems, new laptops in police vehicles with programs that are not being utilized because officers are not being properly trained, money is not being spent wisely. Time should be utilized teaching employees intently on how to properly use the equipment to its fullest potential. A plan must be made immediately. As Shandler states in his book, "Invest time in the process of tracking both training investments and resulting performance. Design ways to demonstrate ROI in the context of the financial and performance models your organization currently uses." (Shandler, 63)

The Department must take a stand now, assess the skills that the officers need, implementing the training and following up with evaluations after the training has been carried out. "Higher levels of accountability through demonstrating the transfer of training and ROI have become the critical acid test for survival of the traditional training function. An immediate, proactive strategic response is now an immediate requirement. Time is of the essence." (Shandler, 64)

METHODOLOGY

Police officers must gain the necessary skills in the use of the latest cutting

edge technological systems in order to enable them to be functional and productive in today's competitive society. The proposed adult learning environment is designed to provide officers with a variety of technology based resources and human resource skills that will establish direction for their use and integration through teaching and learning. These technology resources and human resource skills should improve the delivery of instruction and provide opportunities for officers to enhance their skills and expand their opportunities in today's competitive globalization. If the Department wants to promote a culture for adult learning, we must answer the question, "How do people learn?" The author will address two methods, constructivism and behaviorism.

Constructivism

Constructivism is based on students reflecting on their own past experiences. A person bases their understanding of the world based on those past experiences. A person has his own personal mental "rules" or mental "models". The person adjusts his own experiences to accommodate each new episode in his life. (Briner)

Constructivism is also active participating in problem solving and critical thinking when it comes to critical thinking in regards to a learning activity which a student finds consuming. The student is constructing his mind with previous ideas that he has experienced and integrating them with new concepts.

The teacher is a facilitator, a coach and a co-learner in the constructivist learning approach who guides the student, while stimulating and provoking the student's critical thinking and forming analysis and synthesis throughout the learning process. (Briner)

Behaviorism

Behaviorism is based on observable behavior that does not focus on mental activity (learning) but rather on new behavior patterns. The two most famous and well

known behavior patterns are the classic conditioning and the behavioral or operant conditioning. The most popular example of the classic conditioning behavior was Pavlov's observation of dogs salivating when they would hear a bell and associated it with food. Basically, the connection was that animals and people are biologically "wired" and that certain stimulus produces certain responses in us. The operant condition occurs when a response to a stimulus is reinforced. It is a feedback system. If someone rewards or reinforces the response to a stimulus, then the response becomes more probable in the future. (Black)

Behaviorism has been criticized in the learning environment because it does not account for "learning" and disregards the activities of the mind. However, it has "proven useful for managing both classroom behaviors and instruction delivery. Behaviorism has influenced the development and design of several technologies." (Black)

FINDINGS

Strategy One: Outline the Journey

Every police officer should create a technology professional growth plan, outlining the best route for his future. An option could be to complete a survey such as a Mankato Scale (see attached example). He could assess his needs by asking, "Where am I now?" "What skills will be most beneficial for my future?" "What areas deserve the most attention?" (Bellingham)

This type of survey is a tool designed to help people understand their current level of skills with computer technologies and to help them plan for their professional development. It can help a person determine their level of competencies in basic

computer technology fields. (Bellingham) For example, if a person simply needs skills such as building spreadsheets and file management for office duty, then he may just pursue these types of classes. If a person begins to answer question such as needing to research, finding information, making technological presentations or seeking internet questions/answers, then he will find that he will require higher level courses and can seek further resources (ex: tutorials, distance learning, online courses and other courses that will be discussed further in detail).

Each officer can then commit to try new skills and tools based on such needs. The Department could judge the demand for such classes based on the return of the surveys and could schedule classes based upon request. Upper management could meet regularly to discuss progress with these classes. There would always have to be a checks and balances with a needs assessment made, assuring that the classes were necessary, evaluating the transfer of the training and assuring that the return of the investment was beneficial to the Department.

Strategy Two:

Study Groups

Every officer should join a study group. A group should consist of three or more officers with common interests and common goals. Each group should meet weekly while training is in session and when training is not in session the members should meet regularly to discuss continued learning goals, new ideas and agendas between sessions. They should research material, ask questions and reflect about any successes or failures. This should be an on going process and a group leader should be chosen to conduct follow ups on the successes or failures of ideas discussed.

Strategy Three:**Technology Coaches**

Every trained police officer can then become a technology coach, specialized at something, prepared to assist others to accomplish what they desire. The training academy could agree on designating technology coaches as training instructors in the San Antonio Training Academy for accountability and stability purposes and allow mentors to serve as reinforcement. The best strategy is to share responsibility across the board, find ways to be imaginative and keep each other motivated.

Strategy Four:**Technology Mentors**

Mentor programs are beneficial for personal and professional growth and development. "Today, 47% of American organizations have mentoring programs, and research by the Center for Creative Leadership shows that the number of companies with mentoring programs has doubled within the last four years." (Mentoring Program) A mentor should help a mentee advance, give him guidance about the organization, build trust, encourage partnerships, accept challenges, overcome difficulties and obstacles, motivate and inspire the mentee and aspire him to reach his full potential. A mentor oversees a mentee's career and development goals and assures that the mentee is headed in a positive direction with his career and that his goals are realistic and being met. He shares his past experiences with the mentee and acts as a coach, a teacher, a motivator, a counselor, a guide and a positive role model.

"The mentee has to want to be a partner in the mentoring connection" (Mentoring Program) The officer (mentee) should take responsibility to plan his own career and personal goals. The officer must work hard to gain any skills, knowledge or abilities to

grow. He must become flexible, be open to new ideas, listen to his mentor and consider any new options. The mentee has to **desire** promotions and **yearn** to take the journey of the “Continuous Learning Organization”. The mentee should choose a mentor who is at least two ranks above what the officer is currently ranking because the mentor could guide him with things he has already accomplished and experienced himself.

Strategy Five:

Workplace Visits

Officers should visit other police departments and other organizations that can offer information about their technology resources and skills that would benefit the new “Continuous Learning Organization” philosophy. In order to encourage new ideas and training, the department should organize half day tours to police departments or places who are rich with technological information. The officers should be encouraged to explore, ask questions and interview or record the role of information technologies and skills at the organization that was visited. The officers should discuss and reflect their thoughts and ideas concerning the visits and have input on changes within the department. Since study groups meet regularly, it would be good to discuss and brainstorm over these ideas at the meetings or prior to training sessions.

Strategy Six:

Tutorials and Distance Learning

Many police officers are not aware that technology and education advancements are at their fingertips, easily accessible and affordable. Periodic onsite “just in time” learning is perfect for the busy police officers of the new millennium. Tutorials can be located over the Internet and are described as “...online courses are subscription-based, multi-media tutorials that are served over the web straight to your desktop. Once you

choose and subscribe to a course you'll have unlimited access to it from any computer with Internet access. In effect, you'll be able to update your skills on your own terms and at your own pace." (Learn2.com)

Many courses are offered including: Accounting/Finance, Business Skills, Collegiate, Communication, Databases, French, Internet/Webmaster, Macintosh, spreadsheet and Word Processing. (Learn2.com)

Distance learning allows officers to take a variety of classes over the Internet. There are a variety of technology options available including courses such as online and distance classes, certificate programs, networking, internet and web development and many other great opportunities.

Distance education even offers complete degree programs over the Internet. Many educators ask if distant students learn as much as students receiving traditional face-to-face instruction. Research comparing distance education to traditional face-to-face instruction indicates that teaching and studying at a distance can be as effective as traditional instruction, when the method and technologies used are appropriate to the instructional tasks, there is student-to-student interaction, and when there is timely teacher-to-student feedback. (Gottschalk)

Distance learning offers a wide range of technological options to the distance educator such as:

- Voice - telephone, audioconferencing, tapes and radio
- Video - slides
- Data - computer assisted instruction (CAI)
computer managed instruction (CMI)
computer mediated education (CME)
- Print - textbooks, study guides, workbooks, course syllabi, and case studies. (Gottschalk)

Strategy Seven:

Team Builders

Officers are often times found “standing alone” with no one to understand them. Because police work is so different from any other type of work, teamwork is essential and yet very difficult to integrate in law enforcement because patrol officers are too busy going from one disturbance call to another. This is why teambuilding skills must be taught to supervisors so that they can integrate them to the units and build camaraderie amongst the officers, establish communication, build morale, renew the officer’s spirit and motivate the officers to accomplish the department’s missions and goals.

(McKenzie)

“Team Assessments” could be offered to the various units in order he help eliminate or break down barriers, encourage communication, start group problem solving and teamwork process and to provide real solutions to teamwork obstacles and operational issues. The teams are then offered the opportunity to asses their own strengths and weaknesses and the opportunities for improvement as well as the opportunity to provide concrete ideas for enhancing performance. (Corporate Games)

There are Corporate teambuilding agencies that will actually coordinate and assist an organization to interact while teambuilding with the community. This would be ideal, helping the community, getting to know the community and building a more efficient police team. The Corporate teambuilding agency contacts the community agencies and makes all the research necessary - - - this would form stronger bonds with the community, would be good for the police and community to engage in problem

solving and learning how to work together, it would be a great community policing concept and would make great community projects. (Corporate Games)

DISCUSSION/CONCLUSIONS

In conclusion, the fundamental beliefs of this program would be that the officer should make choices based on past learning experiences and he should take responsibility for planning his own personal and career growth. The police department should begin to nurture the “Continuous Learning Organization” philosophy, support adult learning and encourage every individual officer’s professional development. Officers, in turn, must commit a personal journey of professional and personal growth and discovery. They must commit to engage in a learning experience and overcome obstacles based on trial and error. Together, the officers and the department can meet the learning needs that will assist the Department to become a high performance organization. The Department will then be equipped and able to compete in today’s competitive technology and global economy.

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