

To serve and protect

[Sociology, Community](#)



Each police department believes that integrity and professionalism are the foundations for trust in the community. As trust is a significant element in the overall wellbeing of the society, a working police department must efficiently and effectively manifest integrity and professionalism in its actions so that trust from the community will be earned. The central question, however, is exactly how to achieve such an end. Being a police officer is not an easy task as what others may be inclined to believe.

Quite on the contrary, being a police officer is almost synonymous, if not entirely the same, with risking one's life on the line of duty. It does not take a genius to think that police officers face the risks of "endangering their lives precisely because of the nature of their work" (Ashenhust, p. 605). Being a police officer, the tasks include almost everyday dealings with dangerous criminals, first time public offenders who pose unpredictable threats to the public, or the "unpredictable public environment" teeming with "potential hazards to ordinary citizens" (Ashenhust, p. 605).

As such, balancing one's responsibilities and one's performance in the department is perhaps one of the primary concerns of being a police officer. There are no shortcuts in achieving such a goal. To say the least, the efforts of law enforcing agents to meet their responsibilities is already a given or is already expected that perhaps the primary concern of the officer apart from meeting one's responsibilities should be the prerogative of establishing good rapport with the public for several good reasons. The credibility of every police officer and of the entire police department is directly affected by the performance of the police agents.

As the performance of these agents builds the corresponding image of the police department, it should be the case that the police agents should strive to attain a good performance that will consequently raise the image of the whole department. Since the police department is one of the many government institutions built around the directive of serving the people by providing the needed and ample services to the public, it is imperative that the very structure of the police department must be one which is devoid of internal flaws or, at least, has limited flaws (Block, p. 91).

In order to do this, requirements for prospective police officers such as those applying for the various police positions must be structured according to the principles under which the department is founded. A careful background check with regard to the personal background of the prospective police officers must be secured first so that no 'black sheep' will be included from among the roster of law enforcing agents. Moreover, police departments must see to it that they serve the public with sincerity since an element for building trust is the characteristic of being genuine.

In effect, the mentality of the police officer must be patterned in accordance to the spirit of the principles embodying the government's law enforcing arm. The police officer must act in accordance to his duties not only because he or she is compelled to do so. Far more importantly, the police officer should act as if the task of being a police officer is not a mere task that must be fulfilled but a task which is treated deeply as if it defines the very existence of the law enforcers. It is not enough to merely act because one is required to do so.

Rather, police officers must begin to realize the thought that acting one's duty not out of necessity but out of one's personal drive is far more rewarding, if not for the police department at least for the self. To achieve such a feat, moral building activities must be pursued every once in a while in order to maintain the level of sincerity of the police officers. Enrichment activities specifically geared towards refining and realigning the sincerity of the police officers must be pursued so that the police officers will not lose track of the morality behind principled law enforcement.

By being able to successfully maintain a considerable and observable level of sincerity towards the provision of services to the public, the people will not hesitate to build their trust around the police officers. This is because a legion of police officers being able to sufficiently meet the needs of the community in terms of protection will be able to attract the positive attention of the public. This positive attention on the other hand will expand the good relations between the police officers and the public inasmuch as the police services are sustained.

A positive correlation of a form of relationship between the two creates a more sincere atmosphere. As sincerity translates to a heightened sense of integrity and professionalism, police officers will most likely gain the trust of the community. Further, each police officer should be committed to an open and honest relationship with the community. By this we mean to say that every existing police officer and department must be able to create a harmonious coexistence with the community.

Although building such an atmosphere is not an easy task, it is nevertheless a possible feat, achievable through the initiative of either the law enforcing

agencies or the public, perhaps even both at the same time, or if not, the former case will be more preferred. There are many ways to achieve, and most of these measures are already used in most organizations. For one, every department of the police must have the attitude of establishing rapport with the community as it can benefit both sides in many ways. Establishing rapport with community can be achieved through an open communication with the community.

A form of this type is an open dialogue with the individuals of the community every now and then, say at least once a month, so that the police departments are able to “ get updated with the recent developments from amongst the members of the community” and the whole community in the long run (Goldstein, p. 1123). Being able to create an open dialogue with the public reconsolidates the relationship between police officers and the public. But that is not to say that the police should abandon the objective of sustaining this relationship after a short period.

Quite on the contrary, police officers should take all the chances and efforts of maintaining this rapport. Constant communication with the public—even in simple cases where patrolling police officers can have simple conversation with passing commuters or people attending to their businesses along the streets—aside from open dialogues between the department and the community can be effective means of reinforcing the open communication and harmonious relationship between police officers and the public.

Another way of creating a rapport between the law enforcing departments and the community is to consistently visit and monitor the vicinity where the individuals in the community live in order to have direct contact with the

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people. This ensures that the people within the community are able to get a firsthand experience of interacting with the police officers. It amounts to increasing the feeling of security for the people which in turn furnishes an open relationship between the two sides.

For the most part, an ‘ honest’ police department is a branch of the law enforcing agencies which “ does not hide anything from what the public must essentially know since police departments are still branches of the government” created for the people (Huddleston and Sands, p. 139). Hence, one way of maintaining an ‘ honest’ relationship from both sides is to keep track of the police developments, update the public about these developments, and keep a record for police activities so that the public will be guided accordingly.

An ‘ open’ relationship, on the other hand, entails the presupposition that the public should not hide things in which the police departments must primarily get a grasp on. Conversely, police authorities must also provide the public the vital information they are presumed to know. This can be achieved through a public information dissemination campaign such as public bulletins where police announcements can be placed. In summary, every institution of the police department firmly believes that integrity and professionalism are the key foundations for building trust with the community.

Likewise, every department of the police should be committed to an open and honest relationship with the community. These two codes of ethics make it quite certain that an effective and efficient police body will be maintained while at the same time having a community which responds in accordance to the policies being offered by the police departments. A seamless cooperation

between the police department and the community can be achieved when proper codes of ethics are greatly taken into account. Indeed, being a police officer is no easy task as some may believe it to be.

The dangers of being a police officer are as real as they get, and the tasks are equally heavy. Being a police officer means to serve and to protect not only in terms of serving and protecting the interest of the public but the very integrity of every police department as well. It is like a two sided responsibility where one is inextricable from the other. The fulfillment of one is never enough as well as with the other. That is, being of true service necessitates a good, if not better, performance for the police department and, more importantly, for the public.

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