Police chief essay sample

Culture of the Police Department: An Assessment

This assessment of the prevailing culture in the city's Police Department has been prepared for review by the City Manager as background to changes and improvements that in my opinion need to be implemented so that the department can once again fulfill its obligations to the citizens that we serve. At present, although I am new to the department and to this position as Police Chief, I have already seen that the force is falling far short of its duties in a number of respects. I shall discuss those further and more specifically in this document.

In addition, it is also apparent that my appointment to this position has not been greeted favorably by all in the department; in fact I am well aware that a number of our employees have expressed distrust of me personally, perhaps because I am seen by them as an outsider brought in to be " the new broom" who will adversely affect their situation and even the job security of presently employed officers and other staff. Consequently, I know that I need to tread carefully and to ensure that I use methods that will bring as many people as possible " on side".

I am aware that there are other matters that currently take priority over my perceived need for changes, but I nonetheless have decided to submit this assessment to you now, while my thoughts, views and ideas are fresh.

Problems in the Department

I believe that the term " apathy" covers the major problem area that exists within our workforce, particularly among our patrol officers. In the short time I have been here, I have already seen numerous instances of officers who

simply show up each day to report for their shifts, then just wait around for a call to attend an incident of some sort. There is little or no officer-initiated activity such as stopping suspect vehicles, checking out suspicious persons, using informers to follow up potential crimes, or even just passing the time of day with the public to improve public relations. In short, there is almost no proactive policing going on by the city's patrol force. The force cannot be effective and a significant crime deterrent, operating in this half-hearted manner. There has been a very recent precedent (in the UK) for prosecuting officers who are too lazy to do their sworn duty. Twomey (September 2012) reported about a Scotland Yard detective who was allegedly too lazy to properly follow up evidence in rape cases, allowing offenders to escape prosecution. He now faces prison himself.

There is also a disturbing behavioral element that has been observed in our specialized gang enforcement team. They have made their work area a " No Go" zone, where even management are not permitted without specific permission. That clearly has to change.

One further disturbing, even alarming, situation is that some of the force's officers have allegedly created " special tattoos and challenge coins" depicting the Grim Reaper and our Police Department Patch. I have to say that is perhaps the most worrisome of all the unpleasant aspects of the present Police Department culture that I have so far found. I find that to be reminiscent of some sort of " Hell's Angels" culture – a group of officers within the force yet who appear to consider themselves special in some way

and who may be acting above and outside of the law. I have to deal with that firmly and at the very earliest opportunity.

Given the above alleged problems of police behavior, it does not surprise me in the slightest that there is also evidence of a widespread lack of trust in the police on the part of many of our citizens, especially those in the poorer and deprived parts of the city. This is unfortunately not an uncommon problem, but can be overcome with the right strategies. Wilson (August 2012) reports on a similar situation in Evansville, Indiana, where strenuous efforts on the part of the police force and others are changing the perception of police as racist thugs, and rebuilding trust.

So those are the main " bad apples" that (thankfully) are the minority responsible for souring our city's police force. Part of my role as your new Police Chief is to deal with such issues to restore our police force to one that earns and deserves the respect of all our citizens.

The Way Forward

As mentioned earlier, other matters have of necessity to take precedence currently, but I plan to reorganize the department as soon as possible. I have an outline plan in mind, as follows, which is based loosely on " Steps in Managing a Reorganization" (n. d.) – a UC Berkeley article.

Having defined the problem areas, I intend to first interview each of my senior staff, in order to assess whether a) I believe they should be doing a different job with either more or less responsibility, or b) they should be left in their present role, and c) whether in that person I have a potential ally that can be brought on side to support the needed reorganization. Another

UC Berkeley article " Steps to Building an Effective Team" (n. d.) gives some excellent guidance for someone in my position at this time and in that regard.

Following those interviews, I will determine a revised management structure for the department and will advise each newly-promoted person independently, using the opportunity to make each one of them an ally and a committed member of the new management team. In many ways, this reorganization will follow the eight steps of the process conceived by Kotter in his 1996 book Leading Change.

Once I have a senior management team, we will discuss and plan together the re-structuring of individual unit teams under their management. Without pre-empting their inputs, I believe we will find ways of instituting training/retraining programs that will boost morale and productivity, with the minimum of resentment to change, which is always a risk in these situations. Of course there may be casualties along the way. It might be necessary for example to deal harshly with individuals who have caused particular problems within the department, or who have been seen to be leaders in any of the anti-authority factions that we currently have. However, moves against any such individuals will not be made until after we have " sold" the new regime to entire teams, so that such troublesome individuals will hopefully be seen by their peers as out of step. Fundamentally, I intend to raise morale in the department, which need not involve increasing costs by (e. g.) raising salary levels. We need to retain as many of our existing staff as possible, so long as they will accommodate the needed organizational

improvements. Staff training is expensive, so I need to avoid training new officers from scratch if at all possible. An article entitled " Simple Steps to Raise Employee Morale at Your Workplace" (February 2012) provides tips for raising morale that can benefit an organization such as ours. The five tips suggested (which apply equally to me and all my managers) are as follows: Golden Rule: Treat your employees as you'd like them to treat you. Showing them respect and empathy will encourage the same.

Remember Good Manners: Always and often say " Please" and " Thank You."

Delegate: Give your employees the responsibility and trust to carry out their duties for you.

Remember Praise: If they do good work, especially if over and above mere duty, don't forget to recognize that and offer your appreciation for those efforts.

Add Some Fun: Don't forget to build in some scheduled group activities that are not work. Activities like " casual dress Fridays" and team-building sessions are two such possibilities.

Ibelieve that following the implementation of all these measures we will have a city police force that we can be proud of.

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