

**The Chief and the Union:
*Building a Better Relationship***

**A selection of viewpoints and suggestions sponsored by the
Major City Chiefs
National Executive Institute Associates
for the
Law Enforcement Community**

*Sun Valley, Idaho
June 1999*

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Richard M. Ayres, Director, Center for Labor-Management Studies

FOREWORD

This may be the only book in which you are instructed to read the conclusion first. So, take a look at the conclusion, and if you are satisfied with your overall score, send this handbook down the chain of command for their perusal. Should you not be pleased with the results, then you may start your reading with chapter one.

Unions or fraternal organizations represent a majority of law enforcement officers in the United States in labor negotiations. For the purposes of this handbook, the distinction is not relevant. An organization that seeks to represent the officers for wages, hours, terms and conditions of employment is by definition a union. For example, a majority of officers are members of the oldest police organization, the Fraternal Order of Police (FOP). While the FOP considers itself to be a professional and fraternal organization as opposed to a union, it does represent thousands of officers at the bargaining table. The balance of the other officers represented belong to traditional unions such as the International Brotherhood of Police Officers, the International Union of Police Associations, and the International Brotherhood of Teamsters. In addition to these widely known organizations, the National Association of Police Organizations (NAPO) claims a membership of over 4,000 various local labor associations and acts as a legislative federation representing these organizations before various legislatures at the state and federal level.

For simplicity's sake, we use the term *chief* and *chief executive officer* to refer to any head of a law enforcement agency. Also, the term *law enforcement* is used throughout to cover any police, sheriff, state police, or federal law enforcement organization.

Most chief executive officers view the organization(s) representing their employees with a wary eye. There are many reasons for wariness and suspicion. For example, it may be that the chief does not understand or appreciate the role of the labor organization. Second, in a paramilitary organization such as the police, it is difficult to lead an organization in which the chain of command can be challenged. Third, while the chief demands loyalty from the troops, he or she must be loyal to the wishes of elected officials, such as the mayor or city manager, even when this loyalty is not in the best interest of the officers. Fourth, occasionally police labor organizations use tactics that attack the chief's professional competency. This creates a contentious atmosphere that affects morale, judgement, and decision making. Oftentimes this tactic has led to a *we versus them* attitude within the department and also within the labor organization. Finally, it is not surprising that malcontented or incompetent officers take their real, or imagined, grievances to the labor organization for both redress and support. This places the labor organization in a position of trying to defend officers' actions that are difficult to defend. Whether or not the case is won or lost at the hearing level, the process creates bitter feelings on both sides that are difficult to resolve. Given this list of reasons, it is not unreasonable to conclude that many executives have difficulties in creating positive relationships with labor organization leaders.

Given the nature of the strained relationship between the chief and labor organizations it is remarkable that there are not more job actions involving law enforcement organizations. In recent years, however, there have been few job actions--none of a serious nature. It seems as if

there has been a rise in the labor organization's use of a *vote of no confidence* to call public attention to their grievances against the chief. There are no statistics kept on the use of this sophomoric tactic by police labor organizations. Hardly a week goes by, though, that the local newspapers do not report of vote of this type.

The use of this particular tactic is one frequently used by labor officials whose ulterior motives may be the acquisition of political power to obtain workplace benefits for their members. In the book, *Police Association Power, Politics, and Confrontation* by John Burpo, Ron DeLord, and Michael Shannon, they advocate the acquisition of political power by police organizations as a primary objective. By what means a labor organization achieves this end is not considered particularly relevant.

Sensing that the days of labor peace in law enforcement are drawing to a close, the National Executive Institute Associates and the Major City Chiefs asked some of their members to publish a handbook on how to deal effectively with police labor organizations. As you know the relationship between the chief and labor organizations depends largely on the chief's and labor leaders' personalities and their ability to enter into a mutually beneficial relationship. Thus, no one "handbook" can provide a perfect prescription for success. With this given, that no single work would provide complete answers for everyone, a panel met at the FBI Academy in February 1999 to undertake the task. Members of the panel included:

David Doan, Commander, Los Angeles, California

Russ Leach, Chief of Police (retired), El Paso, Texas

Jim Montgomery, Chief of Police, Bellevue, Washington

Dennis Nowicki, Chief of Police (retired), Charlotte/Mecklenburg, North Carolina

Robert Olson, Chief of Police, Minneapolis, Minnesota

Ron Palmer, Chief of Police, Tulsa, Oklahoma

Edward J. Werder, Chief of Police, Cooper City, Florida

The panel was facilitated by **Richard M. Ayres**, Director, Center for Labor-Management Studies, and me--both of us former FBI Academy faculty members. The following handbook is the work of the panel. It contains many suggestions on how executives can build more positive relationships with labor organizations and their leaders. Hopefully, these suggestions will lead to a more constructive relationship, leading to more efficient and effective law enforcement.

The National Executive Institute Associates and the Major City Chiefs are most grateful to the good people of TRW whose donation to the Associates for research projects made this project possible. The Associates are also most grateful to Jeff Higginbotham, Assistant Director in Charge of FBI Training and Buddy McKinney, Administrator, National Executive Institute for their support and use of the Academy for the project. We are also grateful to Susan McKee for her editorial skills in trying to bring some semblance of order to the handbook under an almost impossibly short deadline. We are sure various grammatical mistakes can be found in the text and ask for your understanding that we felt the immediate need for the handbook was greater than the need for perfection.

Edward Tully

Executive Director, National Executive Institute Associates

LABOR-MANAGEMENT COOPERATION-- WASTED EFFORT OR ACTUAL PAYOFF?

“WE’RE ALL IN THIS ALONE.” -- Lily Tomlin

James Riddle Hoffa--union organizer. Labor leader. Tough guy. Organized crime figure. Police character. Power broker. Dead guy. However you characterize Jimmy Hoffa, you probably don't speak Hoffa's name in the same sentence with sensitive, cooperative, and collaborative. The media portrayed Jimmy Hoffa as a hard-nosed union leader. There were others before him that held that distinction, but there have been few since that would rise to this level. Hoffa was the man. He was emulated, exalted, and praised for his actions in bringing the evils of management to their knees while raising the standard of living for the working class. Hoffa-like images were transformed into movie characters that captured our youthful attention. Those images became even more vivid as we grew and matured and turned into something else. Some of us took the images and embraced them as individual values, and then applied them to our law enforcement careers. We took sides on the issue. Which side you chose depended upon where you were in your life. The once successful union president may well have become a successful chief of police. Whatever the case, it is apparent that these early images were influential in how we do business now.

To my knowledge the Teamsters, in the Hoffa era, never organized a police agency. The police during that time were relegated to the role of controlling unruly strikers, protecting management's property, and ensuring that cities did not burn in the wake of violent union actions. Most would concede Hoffa was a great contributor to the idea that labor-management relations must be adversarial. Many believed the likes of Jimmy Hoffa had carried the commandments of union behavior from the mount. Watching from the sidelines as referees, police officers became eager to enter the game. They saw what gains were being made in working conditions, wages, and benefits as a result of union activities. Then they looked at themselves and saw what had been offered by city administrations, and reached the conclusion that they were being treated as the proverbial second-class citizen. When the time arrived that allowed law enforcement to organize and bargain for wages and other benefits, police officers were ripe for the picking. Police labor-management negotiations had arrived.

The arrival of a livable wage, safer working conditions, appropriate equipment and a reasonable work week was not a bad thing for the industry we call policing. If there was a down side to the infancy of negotiations, it was that the game's ground rules had already been set out. There was history here. The police were not ignorant on how the game had been successfully played out in the past. Nor were they ill prepared to use whatever means necessary to ensure that their *demands* were granted. Law enforcement's trump card was that they were, in fact, the police. There was no other authority, short of federal intervention, that could compete with the power that police unions held over municipal government. Police knew they were the essence of public safety and played that card often--playing it well. Police unions began their existence with some very basic ground rules that were learned from the Jimmy Hoffas of the world.

- An adversarial relationship between union and management is a natural state of affairs. (us vs. them, pure and simple)
- Power controls the negotiation process. (He who goes home with the most toys wins. You can never have enough toys.)

The evolution of the negotiating process still holds these concepts dear. No strike clauses or other legislation has affected the power balance between union and management, but it can be argued that a majority of police collective bargaining agreements are drafted in an adversarial atmosphere. That's what we learned long ago. That is what we have promoted as the business rule. Collectively, police management and labor have promulgated many of the same negotiating techniques that could have been scrapped many years ago if we had been so inclined to do so.

“THOSE THAT CANNOT REMEMBER THE PAST ARE CONDEMNED TO REPEAT IT.” -- George Santayana

Fortunately for all of us the terms *enlightened police executives* and *reasonable union officials* are not oxymora. Ongoing adversarial relationships in labor negotiations are tiresome, expensive, and are not productive. The battle between labor and management creates the occasional winner for a specific issue, but overall the public is not well served when their police department and union cannot agree on simple issues. Many labor officials and police executives have seen the fallacy of *head-to-head, never-give-in* negotiation sessions. Those who believe there may be a better way are implementing change in an attempt to take advantage of what cooperative synergy can create. Many are highly successful. When you take into account all the police labor negotiations that transpire every year and dissect those negotiations into smaller parts, it is obvious that many still prefer (or can't get past the history of) using an ongoing hate-hate relationship. It doesn't matter what the issue, adversarial is best because:

- We know it.
- We grew up with it and have seen it work from time to time.
- We like it (it's easier to say “no” than it is to work on common issues).

Police executives may well feel trapped in this negotiations cycle due to circumstances they believe are beyond their control. Examine the circumstances to determine if the existing situation is one that best serves the citizen's expectations on how effectively they are policed. This assessment needs to minimize the police agency's and union's desires, keeping the public's interest at the forefront. Oftentimes, the citizen's perspective will be a determining factor as to how long police executives keep their jobs. If, at the bargaining table, more of the same occurs and contributes to a disgruntled public and/or public officials, then more of the same is a recipe for a police executive's self-destruction.

There are pertinent questions attached to this small, quiet evolution of labor-management relations. Why change what has been proven successful in the past? This primary question begs a second, more important question, “What criteria do you use to evaluate the past methodology, and how do you compare those successes (or failures) to a new methodology that is an unknown commodity?” A good point to ponder, especially if you tend to be comfortable with the status quo of any situation. However, without experimenting with new techniques at the bargaining table, a third question is raised: “How do you know something doesn't work equally as well or

better if you are unwilling to change?” Considering all of the variables that could be employed in the negotiation arena, cooperative efforts in resolving mutual problems appears to have merit. Management and labor do have common issues that can be resolved to the mutual benefit of both without resorting to time honored adversarial positions and one “winner.”

Police executives, who choose to change how labor-management issues are handled, which depart radically from past practice, must proceed in a calculated manner. The movement from adversary to that of cooperative partner could be considered too much, too quickly—an obvious 180-degree change in direction. Suspicions will be generated from an already suspicious, often skeptical union. City managers, mayors, and other city officials will have the same suspicions. You will have to sell them on the virtues of the change to be implemented. Confused union leaders may promote claims of unfair labor practices. Once the belief that cooperation should be a component of labor-management relations, a police executive may have a hard row to hoe. The effort can pay dividends though. Ample evidence exists that cities, which have adopted a cooperative, value-laden strategy of labor-management relations and negotiations, have made significant strides in meeting everyone’s needs and goals. Moreover, citizens recognize and appreciate the commonality of purpose and the absence of the continuous bickering on issues directly affecting their perception of safety and well being.

“WE ARE OF DIFFERENT OPINIONS AT DIFFERENT HOURS, BUT WE ALWAYS MAY BE SAID TO BE AT HEART ON THE SIDE OF TRUTH.” -- Ralph Waldo Emerson

Many would believe the issues that drive management and labor could never be congruent. Certainly, the labor-management relation horror stories are out there. Those we hear repeated often are extreme examples of how adversarial posturing can turn to the worst, and then be adopted as standard operating procedures. Perhaps in a small segment of policing, labor-management relations have deteriorated beyond repair. In these rare cases, the mere suggestion of changing the existing relationship damages the relationship even more. However, no matter how hard we might argue that labor and management would never see eye to eye on issues based solely on the nature of the beast, there is an ever-growing commonality of purpose that can be built upon.

This commonality is based on the premise that both labor and management have the duty to provide a level of police service that the constituency has demanded. That service level looks different in every jurisdiction and is driven by variables that are common to the chief and the rookie cop. No one can deny that policing in the 21st century will be a conglomeration of emerging issues and trends we (labor & management) have only had to deal with superficially in the past. Police service as we know it will not become any easier. More complex issues will replace or supplement those issues we thought had been resolved. A variety of difficult challenges present themselves to us today. They are intertwined and complex necessitating a collaborative solution. In terms of collective bargaining and labor-management relations, some may stand and proclaim--independent of the other--that they have formulated solutions that, if adopted within the contract’s four-corners, will finally resolve these problems. Some will stand, but none will be able to make those proclamations with a straight face. We would be hard-pressed to find either the police chief or union president who alone could find singular solutions to such timely issues as:

- Youth, Drugs, and Violent Crime
- Diversity and Race – Internal And External
- Civil Disturbances, Terrorism, and Weapons of Mass Destruction
- Civilian Review of Discipline, Complaints, Shootings, etc.
- Court Decisions that Modify
- Management of Change
- Keeping Pace with Current Technology
- Risk Management and Minimizing Litigation Exposure
- Citizen (Customer/Client) Service and Satisfaction
- Privatization of the Public Sector
- Recruiting and Selection
- Ethics and Integrity
- Maintaining and Increasing Necessary Funding

Resolution of these issues by the chief executive acting alone certainly deserves commendation. Most of us can't obtain this level of excellence. The issues are too overwhelming and affect too many people. Resolution of the substantive issues requires us to reach beyond the confines of the corner office to others for assistance. Historically, many of us have not reached too far. We often count solely on our own expertise, the expertise of immediate staff, or the countenance of expertise that the "hired gun" negotiator gives us. It would be unfair to characterize all police executives as being this narrow-minded, but oftentimes it is easier and quicker not to seek the opinion of those who have to carry out the policies we set. This posture could be likened to that of a large family's patriarch/matriarch. If the father/mother figure chooses to run the family with an iron hand and ignores the needs of the family, the other members will find an outlet to express their views. The police analogy is that the chief is the patriarch and the collective bargaining unit is the family. Albert Blum best expresses this in his book, *Management Paternalism and Collective Bargaining*:

Even if the manager does not view the union as a gang, he often still feels they strike a discordant note in a happy home. Once there, unrest develops. A peer group outside the home becomes more important to the children than the parents; the father's powers are challenged; the child begins to think his goals are not synonymous with those of the parents; and, perhaps, worst of all, he wants to have his voice heard in how the home should be run.

Police officers want their voices heard. All police departments attempt to hire the best-educated, most intelligent officers available. This is good public policy. However, is it good public policy not to reach out to this valuable resource of fresh ideas? Would it not be better public policy to allow them to assist in the resolution of seemingly insurmountable issues of mutual concern? Police union/association members are not far removed from where most police executives were at one point in their own careers. Some skill, and probably some luck, put the chief on the other side of the table--roots should not be forgotten. Do not ignore the voice of the rank and file. The militancy of that voice can be a detractor for all concerned. If police executives do not tap into the pulse of that voice, they will likely fail in their endeavors. Whether militant or milk toast, the union's voice must be blended into management's if crucial issues are to be resolved.

Labor-management agenda blending may not be an easy task. Some police executives have risked careers in attempts to create changes in labor relations and negotiations. The risk has had mixed results. Where the implementation has failed, jobs have been lost or retention was made in a hostile environment. By contrast those that have had success have enjoyed a mutual benefit and an easing of the strain of the adversarial posturing. It is satisfying to reach accord without that accord being dictated by binding arbitration.

If the collective bargaining agent and police management are to work together in any collaborative effort, either at or away from the table, it must be understood that today's accepted business rules/practices will not look the same tomorrow. This change will require an extraordinary effort on the part of the police executive and union president. This change will also test the leadership capabilities of both parties. The first step is an agreement that past business practices have not produced the desired results for either party. This may be a huge step in some jurisdictions. The agreement to stipulate this alone will be a benchmark of exactly how good the relationship may become. It tests the leadership capabilities of the police executive and union official alike. It also speaks to the initial type of work that must be completed to lay the foundation for the broader, more holistic work that should follow.

The leadership attached to both sides of the labor-management relation is the key to any success. In Ronald Heifetz's book, *Leadership without Easy Answers*, he speaks to two types of work that are accomplished by leaders. *Technical work* is what we commonly perform as leaders. We know how to lead from a formalized set of organizational procedures that outline what is to be done and who is supposed to do it. That defines *technical work*. It is primary to our job description. In trying to establish a more cooperative relationship between labor and management, a second, more important kind of work must be performed. *Adaptive work* as defined by Heifetz consists of:

...the learning required to address conflicts in the values people hold, or to diminish the gap between the values people stand for and the reality they face. Adaptive work requires a change in values, beliefs, or behavior. The exposure and orchestration of conflict—internal contradictions—within individuals and constituencies provide the leverage for mobilizing people to learn new ways.

This is a significant charge for change. Obviously *adaptive work* cannot be accomplished in the short term. If there is value to be gained in cooperative labor-management relations, it will have to be a growth relationship built on the foundation of mutual benefit, honesty, and most importantly, trust.

“IF YOU TRIED TO DO SOMETHING BUT COULDN'T, YOU ARE FAR BETTER OFF THAN IF YOU HAD TRIED NOTHING AND SUCCEEDED.” -- John T. Ragland Jr.

A police executive who makes the effort to extend the hand of cooperation to a union president may likely have that hand bit. In fact, the hand may be withdrawn as a bloody stub. The skepticism received in response to that offer may be overwhelming. This type of offer can be made outside the realm of actual negotiations or it can be made at the negotiating table. It is becoming more commonplace for labor and management to explore alternate means of negotiating contract matters. There are a host of consultants who will gladly take the police

agency's money and time to put the police team and the union team in the same room and teach the value of cooperation. Actually, this is a lesson we all learned in kindergarten, but may have forgotten. The consultation itself, no matter what the cost, may not be a bad thing if it can bring the parties together. This may well be the inkling that there could be movement away from the adversarial positions of the past. Whether at the table or informally, the offer to depart from business as usual will more than likely result in the union's valid question, "What's in it for us?"

The correct answer to that question is up for grabs. It is situational and totally dependent on what point the department is at on the labor-relations continuum. An analysis of where the relationship is will have to be performed to give a meaningful answer. Lip service to this question will not allow the union to gain the necessary insight they need to get a read on where the police executive is coming from. Additionally, if the answer only speaks to "What's in it for the chief," there is little chance of going any further. The esoteric response of, "Think how nice it would be if we all got along" may draw nothing but laughter. Consider it a given that this question will be asked. The first few words in response to this all-important question will set the tone for how far this conversation goes. A calculated response in the terms of tangible benefits is the best answer and will be received more favorably. Initially, emphasize the benefits the union may gain by this relationship. This speaks to the basic question asked. The specificity of this response may spark or hold interest in the proposal, and eventually the opportunity to propose issues mutually beneficial to both parties can be presented. If thought out properly prior to the presentation, many of the issues brought out under the guise of "labor" may have a benefit for "management." The commonality of issues belies the need to categorize benefits into one camp or the other. Not getting to where you want to be in the first round of discussions should not be a deterrent to try again. "Another day, another way" is an axiom that has real meaning in this situation. If met with resistance initially, another try may likely produce long-term positive results.

Police officers and executives have a show-me attitude that is intrinsic with their jobs. The police executive must be sold on the benefits of a cooperative labor-management relationship before it can be sold to subordinates, city officials, or the public. Thinking about the benefits that may be gained by a non-traditional, cooperative labor-management relationship may not reveal many ideas to you as an individual. Are there talking points that already exist? Is there an executive summary? The answer is yes and no to both questions. There exists ample literature beyond this text that would support the belief that changes in traditional adversarial labor-management relations are beneficial--but there is no cookbook, per se. It is not necessary to go into these case studies in any depth. However, for this purpose it is well advised to create a short list of thinking/speaking points that are briefly supported with their anticipated benefits. In no particular order or priority, the following thoughts are issues compiled by a diverse group of police executives questioned on this issue:

- *Cost of Doing Business* -- Negotiations eat up time, human resources and money. It could be more cost effective for both the union and city to consider alternate bargaining strategies.
- *Time Wasted on Being Adversarial* -- Energy is spent on being hateful or contradictory. The same energy could be spent in more productive ways to exhibit to the public that crime issues are more important than "chipping" at each other.

- *Education of Union Officials* -- Smart police executives ensure that union officials are educated on the entirety of issues surrounding negotiations and may share in the costs of such training (e.g., city budgets, restraints to negotiating, policy and procedure development, effective negotiating techniques, etc.).
- *Breaking the Bank* -- Non productive negotiations, binding arbitration, and countless grievances cost everybody money. The city and union are both affected. The money spent on these issues could be better spent on benefits when these monies do not have to be directed toward traditional adversarial activities.
- *Working Beyond the Expiration of the Contract* -- The public perception of continually working past the contract's expiration speaks loudly to the fact that the primary issue for the police agency and the members is their own welfare rather than the welfare of the public they serve.
- *Image and Credibility* -- Step back and look at the agency and the posturing that goes on to maintain the adversarial relationship. It may look pretty comical to the lay person making a judgement on the agency and its efficiency. Should there be an expectation that tax dollars or bond money be voted to those who can't get past the issues of internal management? Probably not.
- *Media Role* -- The media will take a poor labor-management relationship and spin it into a story of strife and discontent that will be damaging to the reputation of an otherwise sound agency. Conversely, something out of the ordinary, which produces visible results, lays the foundation for some positive press on how progressive and efficient the agency has become.
- *Staffing* -- Traditional labor-management relations consume hours of time that could be better spent on policing. Excessive labor-management issues drain the availability of personnel that could be devoted to purer law enforcement activities. How many officers are in the grievance hearing vs. how many officers are on the street?
- *Capture the Power, Thoughts and Energy of the Rank and File* -- Tap into this resource for the resolution of issues that affect everyone. Empowerment may sound trite, but the voices need to be heard. If not heard and acknowledged by management, then other less pleasurable venues will be used by labor to ensure their point is recognized.
- *Focus on Crime Problems* -- All police executives desire more time to deal with crime and related issues. Police officers really want the same opportunity. Personnel and labor issues erode this focus. Is the front-page article about an agency one that speaks to crime prevention or internal strife?
- *Candidacy and Election of Union Officials* -- Union officials and police executives must "posture" their positions on issues at certain times. A "soft" union official may be as ineffective as a "soft" police chief. A respect for this posturing does not need to impede gains made through cooperative efforts.

- *Avoiding Votes of No Confidence* – Votes of no confidence are a significant contributing circumstance to police executives losing their jobs. Good labor-management relations conducted in the atmosphere of cooperation and respect is good insurance to prevent this type of action.
- *Union Does have a Responsibility to the Public Trust* -- The realization that police officers have the same responsibilities to the public as their bosses and employing agencies do, positively contributes to the premise that issues can be resolved with a commonality of purpose. There are numerous issues that impact both the union and management equally.
- *Money Saver for the Union* -- Unions can save money by changing traditional practices. Usually this is in the form of costs paid to attorneys and others to ensure adversarial activities are maintained. The savings gained could be turned into additional union-provided benefits for their members without the prospect of raising dues or special assessments.
- *Sense of Community Creates Public Support* -- A community that sees its police force's attention directed toward them and not ongoing labor issues will be appreciative in a variety of ways that will foster better police-community relations.
- *Legislative Issue* -- A common voice of labor and management speaking to police-related legislative issues is a voice that must be reckoned with. Legislators cannot afford to ignore the lobbying of an issue when brought forth by a joint resolution of police and union leaders.
- *Critical Incidents* -- The public rightfully demands immediate, seamless police service in times of crisis. Standing on the same platform cooperatively addressing the same issues of public concern goes a long way for the union official, the police executive, and city leader. Delays or questions of service delivery in these situations, based on petty labor-management relations, are damning and unnecessary.
- *Fragility of the Relationship* -- Trust in a cooperative relationship can be easily violated. To sustain a cooperative relationship, both parties must work toward that end or face the reality of losing any gains that may have been realized.
- *Small Bites vs. a Big Chunk* -- Wholesale or even limited cooperation will not come overnight. Although a cooperative attitude may appear at the outset as a given, the day-to-day practice of this attitude will, at best, be difficult. Like eating an elephant, the effort must be dissected and taken in small increments to be successful.
- *Policy Agreement* -- It is not a bad thing to allow a union to review and input into policy development. Oftentimes the rank and file has the best ideas as they relate to operational implementation. It doesn't hurt to listen. It may even result in one less item being grieved or negotiated.
- *Power Balance* -- A change of business practices that surround labor-management relations is usually accompanied by a change in the power balance. From what position both parties bargain from will be forever changed. The balance of power will be more fluid with cooperation each, hopefully, understanding it has not been given away or granted without thought.

- *Giving Credit where Credit is Due* -- “When the little man grabs for credit, the big man gives it away.” Every good idea is not necessarily the police executive’s or the union’s. A mutual understanding of when “credit” is created that it go to rightful owner will enhance the desired level of trust and further the prospects of other collaborative efforts.
- *Quality of Life of Membership vs. the Quality of Life of the Community* -- There must be a mutual understanding of who comes first in the discussions. The community should always be considered the focal point of effort. There is, however, a balance that can be struck in this discussion. A chicken or the egg question to some. If the police ignore the needs of the community, no amount of negotiation or rhetoric will restore the community’s confidence in the police.
- *Change of Terms and Conditions* -- Yes, this type of change in business practices gives rise to a claim of changes of terms and conditions of employment. This should be recognized and incorporated into the “terms of engagement” or “ground rules” when discussing overall changes in labor-management relations.
- *Putting the Union Out Front on Issues* -- It is possible to allow the union and the union officials brief or continued moments in the sun that allow the membership to see that management is not speaking out of both sides of their mouths on the issue of changing the relationship. Taking the second chair on some issues speaks to the sincerity of the offer and the willingness to allow power to flow to all parts of the agency.
- *Co-Sponsoring Events* -- Certain community events can be co-sponsored and participated in by union and management alike. Community policing initiatives lend themselves very well to this type of cooperation. When labor and management are on the same marquee, much mutual goodwill can be gained.
- *Endorsement of Union Activities by Management* -- Selected union activities can be endorsed by management if those activities are designed to promote crime prevention efforts, crime reduction, and other promotions that benefit citizens. Other, non labor related, officer-oriented activities (e.g., line of duty death fundraisers, injury, etc.) can also be endorsed without the direct management participation. Management does not necessarily need to be there to recognize a good idea promoted by labor.
- *What’s in it for Us?* -- Bottom line--all of the above. However, it is not about doing more with less. The police executive will not be perceived as sincere if this attitude is conveyed in the discussion. Collectively, all want a good wage, good working conditions, a good reputation in the community and other intrinsic work-related benefits. Management should not pursue the discussion of cooperation if “more with less” is the objective.

“OPPORTUNITIES CARRY WITH THEM OBLIGATIONS.” -- Anonymous

Few would deny that opportunities exist by exploring the concept of non-traditional, cooperative labor-management relations. What any one police executive chooses to do with this information is entirely situational. What is happening in any one jurisdiction is unique from the

next. Other chapters in this text better explore the many variables of considering and/or implementing the trappings of a cooperative labor-management philosophy. Decisions on whether this is an opportunity for a particular agency should be made with eyes wide open. There will be pitfalls that will be readily identifiable. City officials and legal advisors may curtail the exploration of such initiatives. Union officials may balk at the thought of adopting something they are unfamiliar with, sensing some type of management “trap.” If the decision is made to seek the opportunities, then there exists the obligation of the police executive to ensure a smooth transition to the new, altered state of doing business. It would be ill advised to approach the transition without a plan and without a desire to do it right the first time.

Minimally, a plan needs to be devised that will incorporate both what may be gained and what may be the obstacles to success. All critical players must be identified at the outset and incorporated in the overall plan. Timing of the implementation and the political climate are equally as important. Overall, there must be a belief that the cooperative relationship will be beneficial to all. Beneficial to a degree that surpasses the effectiveness of the relationship that is currently in place. Buy-in and sale of a cooperative labor-management relationship rests with the police executive. Their actions and words must belie the traditional, Hoffa-like, adversarial strongholds that have been endured for decades. The ultimate payoff to the question of “What’s in it for me?” is a new era of cooperation directed, not toward the union or police executive, but more accurately directed toward the citizens. That is worth pursuing.

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UNDER THE GUN: STRATEGIES FOR SURVIVAL

Within this handbook are many recommendations that you should find helpful in promoting professional relationships with police labor organizations. None of the strategies come with a guarantee that by putting them into operation you will avoid conflict with the union. As police chiefs, we know that we are leaders who make decisions that will not be appreciated by all. No matter how well intentioned we are, or how hard we try to maintain a positive relationship with the police union, some of us will inevitably find ourselves in conflict with the union leadership, and with the rank and file members of our department.

Union-management disputes can become quite contentious--and can be hazardous to the police chief's tenure. Sometimes the conflicts lead to a *vote of no confidence*. Often the all too familiar journey of feuding chief, to embattled chief, to former chief follows. If you experience a vote of no confidence, what should you do?

In this chapter we will briefly analyze some recent cases where police chiefs were subjected to a vote of no confidence, discuss the consequences, and offer some suggestions on what can be done should you ever become the target of such a vote. Generally, we can benefit from our colleagues' experiences.

The review of recent incidents of no-confidence votes was informative. Searching the Internet, I found 29 such votes mentioned in articles in the past three years. Each occurred in a department that functioned under a collective bargaining agreement. The articles referenced the department's size, which ranged from the largest to a department of 19, and were found in urban, suburban and rural communities. All but one article reported that the vote resulted in favor of the no-confidence resolution. The one exception reported that the vote was taken, but the union did not reveal the results. Unions will not call for a vote of no confidence unless they are positive of the outcome—they won't announce the result of failed resolutions.

The two most commonly expressed reasons for the vote were lack of leadership and disciplinary practices. Each was mentioned in fourteen of the articles. The next most common reason given was displeasure with organizational change--mentioned in eight cases. Getting five mentions were the chief's ethical conduct, special treatment of favored employees, and accessibility. Other reasons given for the unfavorable vote included, a breakdown in contract negotiations (3 cases); unilateral rule change (3 cases); benefits reduction (3 cases); chief out of town too much (2 cases); chief incompetent (2 cases); racial discrimination (2 cases); staff shortage (2 cases); inadequate equipment (2 cases); and chief does not wear uniform (1 case).

Political infighting was frequently at play in the cases reviewed, ranging from feuds between opposing party council members to newly elected mayors looking to replace the chief. However, most of the news articles reported that his/her superiors supported the embattled chief. The articles also reported that the chief stayed in office. Seven of the 29 cases resulted in the chief resigning.

The increasing tendency for local unions to initiate personal attacks against police chiefs is driven by many reasons--some personal and others a basic anti-management technique. The union leadership is subject to few restraints in their tactics, however; the police chief is often severely limited in responding to such attacks. For example in many of the reviewed cases, the chief learned of the vote through the news media. There are few chiefs who have not been taken to task for allowing management decisions to reach his or her officers through a news article before they are announced within the department's communication structure.

An analysis of the articles for police chiefs' responses to the no-confidence vote was not as productive. This is probably a function of the information source. I suspect that if we contacted each of the chiefs, a rich collection of strategies would be found. Our study did not permit such an inquiry. Nevertheless, we were able to glean some useful strategies from the articles and other sources, including a publication of the International Association of Fire Chiefs.

The articles reveal that an effective course of action is to maintain the high ground. Those chiefs who respond in a controlled, professional manner fared better than those who lashed back at the union. The chiefs that showed sensitivity to the issues raised by the union--but not caving into the coercion-- appeared as solid leaders. In fact, in at least one case the union leader backed down from his attack because, it appeared, the chief did not allow himself to accept the bait to engage in a public argument.

I offer you a baker's dozen of strategies to consider when faced with a *no-confidence* vote¹:

1. ***Always present yourself as professional and reasonable.*** Remember that union leadership has no rules of decorum to follow. They will try to bait you into a very public battle of accusation and innuendo. Those officers, who may not be 100% behind the vote, will be looking to you to behave as their respected leader. If you don't you may lose any support you have with those officers. Ethical leadership requires you to discuss issues over personalities, and to refrain from taking retributive punitive actions.
2. ***Keep your superiors informed.*** If a confrontation is developing between you and the union, make sure that your boss knows. Your superiors should know where you stand on the issue and why. You do not like surprises from your subordinates, neither will your bosses.
3. ***Know where your superiors stand.*** At some point, you may be in a situation where your superiors or elected officials do not support your position. This may be because they do not agree with you, because they have made a deal with the union, or because they do not understand the issues. You may find yourself in an impossible situation and it is best to recognize this before it is too late.
4. ***Articulate your position clearly.*** In a battle for credibility, the individual who has a reasonable approach and clearly presents logical policies should have an advantage. It is too easy to discredit a chief who cannot clearly express a position, or changes directions at the first sign of trouble.

¹ International Association of Fire Chiefs. "Fire Chief Under Attack: Labor Management Conflict in the Fire Service." November 1997 (<http://www.iafc.org>).

5. ***Request the union to present a specific written list and explanation of their complaints and requested actions.*** This request should be made directly to the union, then released to the media. If they will not provide it in writing, arrange for a meeting with both management and union officials present. Seek a clear and precise understanding of their issues.
6. ***Be open and accessible to the news media.*** Most likely your knowledge of the *vote of no confidence* came to you through the media. The news media play an important part in presenting the issues to elected officials and to union members, as well as to the general public. Respond to union charges with a clear statement to the media, directed at the issues. Most reporters will give you "good press" if they perceive that you are open and honest with them and your policies are reasonable. If they find that you have been concealing information or taking advantage of them, you will quickly lose that advantage.
7. ***Document your communications with the union leadership.*** Do not leave yourself open to claims that something was or was not said. You will have a significant advantage if you can refer to accurate notes of every conversation and have a complete list of telephone calls, including unsuccessful attempts to reach someone, unreturned messages, and unsuccessful attempts to return their calls.
8. ***Establish firm expectations for your management team.*** Managers who are unsure of their loyalties can be a serious problem. If they are not committed to management policies, they are not part of management. Be sure that they know what you expect.
9. ***Continue to live by and enforce the rules and regulations in a fair and equitable manner.*** Your opponents will go as far as they can to discredit you. Make it clear to them that you will enforce the departmental rules and regulations that apply to their conduct. A written warning lets them know when they are close to the limit and establishes a foundation for subsequent disciplinary actions. It is just as important that you are careful about your conduct so that you do not give the union opportunities to further attack you.
10. ***Avoid conversations with your opponents without a witness present.*** The presence of a witness makes it much more difficult to misrepresent the contents of the conversation at a later date. A witness will also inhibit abusive or insubordinate conversation.
11. ***Discuss your positions and concerns with trusted individuals.*** Even the Lone Ranger had a trusted sidekick. You have to have some team members or peers who will help you find reality in the midst of anarchy. Let them tell you if they think you are off base--there may be fight. If you are on the right track, they can probably help you sort out the problems and develop a successful plan.
12. ***Help your supporters to help you.*** Take advantage of the individuals and organizations that support you. This includes those within the department and outside. Your opponents may be a vocal minority who are using their position and influence to intimidate the majority. Your inside supporters may be able to displace them--if you help them to help you. The same factors can apply if you have supporters in the community who will use their political influence with elected officials. To be able to help you, they have to understand the issues and trust your judgement.

13. ***Find a source of relief for your stress.*** Your family and close friends may be your greatest source of strength, but if you take all of the stress home it will always be there waiting for you to return. Determine the outlet that works for you, whether it is exercise, religion, sports or gardening.

Throughout the entire ordeal it is important to keep in mind that, unless you intend on resigning your position as chief--when the problem abates--you will have to continue to work with the union leadership. Maintain a sense of humor. Humor in the work place serves many purposes. Humor can relieve tension in interpersonal encounters, relieve the stress of the confrontation, and be a catalyst to a less contentious relationship in the future. It is also very important to remember that the major element in the art of negotiations is the realization that when negotiations on a particular subject are concluded, negotiations on the next subject begin. Negotiations are a continual process. Remember this when you considering gloating over your victory or are trying to figure out how to get even with those in the department who did not support you during the confrontation. Use a little common sense in these matters as your actions can only be viewed as the beginning negotiations in the next conflict.

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Chief of Police (retired)
Charlotte/Mecklenburg*

THE ROLE OF THE CHIEF AND WHY IT DOES MATTER

Your relationship with the police union is fertile ground for misunderstandings, assumptions, and misconceptions that will create problems for you and your department. Your job, as complicated as it is, must include proactive efforts to maintain a good relationship with your staff and their union. One of the keys to a good relationship is to understand your role and the role of the union and your municipal government (city). You must also make sure that the union understands your role in their relationship with you and the city. Many chiefs have lost their jobs or had a very difficult time because of misconceptions in the labor-management dynamic.

The role of a chief of police is the most difficult in the labor-management dynamic because they rarely control any significant part of the negotiation process. The city controls money and benefit issues, leaving the chief to protect the working rules or management rights that are necessary for the department's efficient operation. Management rights can become pawns in the process, when the city trades them away in return for monetary concessions. As the chief you must have input into the city's position and participate in the process. To accomplish this feat, the chief must have city officials', the union's and the community's respect so that your viewpoint will impact the process. A chief must respect the needs and opinions of the city, union, and community in order to engender their respect. Your goal should be to represent the community's need for a safe city and a well-managed police force, while managing union demands that will have a negative impact on the community without bankrupting the city.

While this may sound like an impossible task, it is only one facet of what you are already doing. Your role as the police department's general manager requires that you maintain good communications with your community and local elected and appointed officials. You must look at your employees and their union as another group with whom you must maintain good communication. No matter where you work, you have to deal with police unions or associations that will get involved in local politics to influence labor negotiations. Therefore, you must first accept that employees need an outlet to express their opinions and needs. You must also respect that need and recognize that it impacts your department's effectiveness.

The police union's job is to address the collective needs of its members. Even if you are the most effective leader, there will be at least one unhappy employee. The union provides an outlet for disgruntled employees. For the members to view their union as effective it must be active in local and state politics and take public positions on issues impacting its members. The union must also question the chief's actions in managing the department—to include disciplinary actions--or the membership will think them ineffective. The union president and/or union boards are not unlike politicians, as they need to be reelected by the membership and, therefore, must be responsive to member needs. They may not always act in the best interest of the community because their role is to get the best contract and working conditions for their members, even if that means a less efficient or effective department. They may also provide a social outlet for officers and their families, thereby building a strong loyalty to the union and not to the department. Once you understand the union's role, your role becomes clearer.

Unfortunately there is another player in this dynamic--the city. Whether you have a city manager, strong mayor or strong city council-style of government they all have the same role to play in the labor-management dynamic. The city representative's role is to balance the city's fiscal realities against the competing demands for resources within the context of the local political climate. The reality that you are hired and fired by city representatives makes influencing the city's position a very difficult task.

You must know how the city's budget process works and where the money comes from as well as what the competing interests are within the city budget. City representatives must address the needs and expectations of the elected officials and ultimately the people who elected them to office. These needs and expectations may not be in the department's best interest. As the chief of police you must learn what needs and expectations to oppose and which ones to compromise on for the good of the department and the community. No matter what type of local government you work for, you must determine your bosses' needs and anticipate the impact these needs have on the department as well as how they translate to your employees and their union.

We have talked about the roles of the union and the city in general terms to try and make the information applicable to as many people as possible. There may be other influences on the labor-management dynamic. If you work in a strong labor state you may have some form of binding arbitration or mandated employee rights provisions that you will have to take into consideration. If you live in a right-to-work state or one where the police cannot form a union or association for the purpose of collective bargaining, you will still need to anticipate the needs of your employees. They will find a way to influence the policy makers and ultimately their contract. You need to determine who are the stakeholders in your community and in your city government and what their expectations are of you and your department. No matter the size of the city, there are always those who have more influence on elected officials or who can sway public opinion by taking a position that must be considered.

The size of the community also impacts the roles of the union and the city. If you work in a small department, you may have a better relationship with your officers than the union officials. On the flip side, the union may have more influence on the elected officials in a small department. The chief is more isolated in larger departments and may not have as much influence on officers. The union may have to compete with other strong unions in a larger city for the attention of elected officials, or the union may be even more influential because of its size and financial resources. Regardless of the size of the city or department, the fundamental role of the union and the city is the same. The roles of each party to the labor-management dynamic must be clear to you so that you can influence the dynamic in the best interest of the community and your department.

As chief you must understand the benefits of labor-management cooperation as well as the politics involved in this relationship. Lines of communication must be established so that you develop personal credibility and establish relationships with the key stakeholders. You must have a personal, as well as a department philosophy, to guide the department through uncharted waters. You must do all of these things if you are going to influence contract negotiations and maintain an effective and efficient department. Safeguarding management rights, which are essential to the administration of the department, is also necessary.

In 1987, the National Executive Institute formed a committee that identified the critical management rights that they believed chiefs must possess to effectively direct their agencies. The committee defined management rights as, “a delegated right of a chief of police to unilaterally decide what is to be done and when, where, and by whom it needs to be done.” Generally the city delegates the rights to the chief of police so that they can fulfill the mission of their department. When given these rights, chiefs also become responsible and accountable for how effectively they use them. The committee identified the following rights as critical:

- To plan, direct, and control all police operations and set departmental policy, goals, and objectives;
- to discipline and fire employees and establish disciplinary procedures;
- to determine work and performance standards;
- to determine staffing levels;
- to determine work schedules, tours of duty, and daily assignments;
- to determine transfer policies;
- to hire and determine selection criteria of employees;
- to promote employees and determine promotional procedures;
- to determine standards of conduct of employees, both on and off duty;
- to educate and train employees and determine criteria and procedures; and
- to contract or subcontract out for goods and services.

The committee did not consider this list of management rights as all-inclusive, but did consider them to encompass the rights that chiefs deem essential to accomplish their obligations and responsibilities. While some of these rights have been impacted by arbitration agreements, they remain as the core of your rights as chief. It is essential that you maintain them as management rights.

The chief’s role also includes representing and defending the community’s rights and expectations of the police at the bargaining table. To accomplish this the chief must:

- Establish him/herself in the community so that their views can be truly represented.
- Bridge the gap between the city and the union by helping both sides to see reality.
- Help the city to anticipate and properly respond to union concerns and demands.
- Assist the union to properly understand how the city budget process works and provide information that will prevent the union from unrealistic expectations of the city.
- Be a part of the bargaining process, not only to protect management rights, but also to keep the process from collapsing.

As chief your effectiveness is influenced by many things beyond your control. Therefore, you must build personal credibility with your officers, the community, elected officials and the union. Deal with the tough issues as well as the easy issues in a consistent and even-handed method. As chief you must recognize the officers’ right to disagree with management decisions and have those issues addressed at the bargaining table. Also, you must respect your officers as well as their right to unionize. While it sometimes is difficult to personally respect a very difficult union leader, you must respect the office they hold. You must be consistent in the treatment of employees. All employees must be treated with the same respect and consideration regardless of their personality. Employees, the community and city officials are watching what

you do. You will be reminded of your failures when it best suits others' interest. It is your job as chief to give them as little ammunition as possible.

Ultimately the role of the chief of police is that of peacemaker. You must learn to disagree with the union and officers in a productive way. Respecting the rights and the roles of the union and the city while safeguarding management rights and the community's interests is of great importance. As chief you must help the union to see their role as well as that of the city and community. In addition, as chief you must help the union deal with the conflicts inherent in the collective bargaining arena in a productive way. Poor labor relations can destroy the quality of life within a department as well as its effectiveness. Your job is to minimize the negative impact. While it helps to have the wisdom of Solomon and the patience of Job, you can do a great job by making the effort to understand the roles in the labor-management dynamic and act on the information. As a chief of police you are more influential than you may realize. For the betterment of the community and department, you must use your influence.

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LABOR-MANAGEMENT RELATIONS PHILOSOPHY

In addition to the hundreds of other duties expected of today's professional law enforcement executive, the maintenance of a set of organizational values or *core values*, is among the more critical. Usually, department policy and procedure is well articulated and codified in the department operations manual; however, the existence of an organizational values statement, mission statement, or organizational code of conduct should be omnipotent. Why? Because these documents can ultimately engender a harmonious, respectful *agree to disagree* relationship between police management and labor. Values encompass the things that are the most important to us. They are the ingrained standards that influence almost every part of our lives. They impact our moral judgements, the way we respond to others, and our commitment to personal as well as organizational goals. Ensuring that the public and employees know what the law enforcement executive and the agency stand for, is a process that a successful executive and his or her organizations take seriously.

The fostering of a professional relationship through open communication with police union leaders is essential if we are to even reach an *agree to disagree* stage in any discussion. Informal discussions, meet and confer about issues, the heat of collective bargaining, or even arbitration, need not degenerate to all-out hostility and antagonism. They indeed need not and should not if a "harmonious" relationship based on adherence to the department's organizational values has been developed between management and labor. In short, the most historically contentious relationships between police executives and their union leadership can be controlled if there is a definitive statement of organizational values. If we are sincere in our commitment to instill moral and ethical guidance and direction in our employees, these formal statements can be extremely important. They must be more than simple codes of conduct, however. They must clearly articulate the vision by which our employees identify with and evaluate their role within the organizational structure.

Modern law enforcement agencies are finally accepting the need to embrace value-centered organizational ideology as a way to humanize agencies that were traditionally guided by the "book." The antiquated department manual recitation of section after section of "thou shalt nots" seldom included the human factor, and more often than not, failed to address ethical issues or give credence to the importance of interpersonal relationships in the workplace. Dealing with process, policy and procedure is essential, but so is the recognition of self-worth. Allowing employees to articulate their own commitment to integrity, credibility and professionalism in a mission statement or set of core values is not only the right thing to do, but also the way to document expectations of behavior. If created as a joint labor-management effort, this document can become the guide for not only outlining the course of a department's ethical and moral behavior, but also establishing a solid professional labor-management relationship.

The following organizational values' statement is an outstanding example of an agency's commitment not only to its community, but also to its members and to its high ethical standards of professionalism.

We, the members of the Police Department, are committed to providing quality service to the community.

We believe that each one of us makes the difference between a good organization and an excellent one and have agreed upon the following as our organizational values.

WE VALUE TRUST

We believe our actions should be reliable, dependable, and consistent.

We are committed to uncompromised integrity in all our actions.

We strive for a record of trust, fairness, and approachability.

WE VALUE HONESTY

We believe honesty is fundamental to effective delivery of law enforcement services.

We will strive to treat our clients and each other in a straightforward manner with an attitude of fairness.

We are committed to uncompromised honesty in all our actions.

WE VALUE INTEGRITY

We believe that integrity is basic to the accomplishment of our mission.

We recognize that both personal and organizational integrity is essential to the maintenance of this department.

We will be honest, open, and fair in dealing with others.

We accept responsibility for our actions and are willing to admit to mistakes and strive to build credibility by our behavior.

We respect individual, as well as community diversity, while maintaining the public trust.

WE VALUE PROFESSIONALISM

We strive for excellence in everything we do.

We expect hard work and a clear sense of commitment from all members of our department.

We believe it is our job to prevent, report, and investigate crime, without compromise, while protecting the rights of everyone.

We will enforce the laws of the land in conformance with departmental regulations.

We believe all members must strive to ensure their actions are always professional and in the best interest of the community and the department they serve.

WE VALUE TEAMWORK

We recognize teamwork as essential to a successful organization.

We believe that use of collective knowledge and abilities enhance the opportunity to reach our potential.

We will encourage independent action and initiative with the recognition that our success as an organization is realized through cooperative effort.

WE VALUE LOYALTY

We must be loyal to our oath of office, the department as a whole, all its members and the divisions, bureaus, and shifts to which we are assigned.

We believe that personal loyalty to our profession is a necessary ingredient to a successful and rewarding career.

WE VALUE PRIDE

We are proud of the community we serve.

We are proud of the service we provide the public.

We are proud of the Police Department and its members.

A law enforcement organization that can identify and articulate its mission in value-centered terms is an organization that is also capable of understanding the importance of establishing and maintaining a professional internal atmosphere. Both management and labor have an obligation to conduct their business within the values expressed by the organization and can do so by embracing the opportunity to build on those published values. How that is accomplished can be a true test of a chief's leadership, but a test that can be passed with flying colors if a commitment is made to clearly and consistently enhance labor-management communications. It is crucial to underscore the need for chiefs of police and police union leaders to engage in ongoing dialogue about both management rights and officer rights issues.

This is not a sacred process. Indeed, labor knows what it wants for its membership and is seldom shy about asking or even demanding management concessions. Management likewise

knows what rights are worth protecting and is usually adamant about what issues should even be discussed with police union representatives. Police executives, more often than not, get themselves into trouble with the union when they attempt to re-define the union's role or publicly question its motive on issues. Constant communication, therefore, is essential and should be more than merely a relationship philosophy. It should be an automatic process that is scheduled into the normal routine of the law enforcement executive. Remember that inclusionary management means participatory management--and that means including the police union.

Successful law enforcement organizations have embraced the participatory management philosophy and have gone as far as to develop a formal statement to guide the labor-management relationship. From a broad organizational values' statement to a *Marquis of Queensbury* rules approach to labor-management engagement, the truly outstanding law enforcement organizations have demonstrated their commitment to value-driven conduct. The following three examples of labor-management relations philosophy statements demonstrate a professional and ethical commitment to *agreeing to disagree* in agreeable fashion.

LABOR-MANAGEMENT RELATIONS PHILOSOPHY STATEMENT – EXAMPLE 1

It shall be the philosophy of labor and management to assemble, to provide a forum that improves the mission, function, and performance of the Police Department and its members. The philosophy shall be founded on respect, dignity, honesty, and fairness.

We seek to improve the work environment by fostering trust, pride and cooperation in an effort to provide the highest level of quality service to the community.

We will support this philosophy by:

As professionals we agree to disagree agreeably and respect each other's roles and responsibilities;

We pledge to focus on the problem and not personalities;

We agree to the proper and timely flow of information and promote and encourage open communications;

We agree to respect the chain-of-command by not airing unresolved disputes to the media and other outside influences.

We pledge to preserve human dignity by caring for the citizens we serve, and for each other.

LABOR-MANAGEMENT RELATIONS PHILOSOPHY STATEMENT – EXAMPLE 2

“Maintaining a professional organization, management and labor will engage in a partnership when addressing issues affecting the public and employee quality of life.

Interactions will be conducted with respect and dignity:

As professionals, we understand that disagreement will occur. Together we will strive to resolve differences in a timely manner, realizing that at times we will disagree, but in an agreeable fashion.

Communications will be cordial, factual, and open.

Efforts will be made to resolve problems at the lowest level possible.

We will not engage in rumormongering.

We will adhere to the values of the organization.”

PHILOSOPHY STATEMENT FOR THE FOP AND THE PBP – EXAMPLE 3

As the leadership representatives of the FOP and PBP, we pledge to work together in an atmosphere of respect, dignity, honesty and fairness.

We will conduct all interactions professionally and with mutual respect for the position, role and responsibility of one another.

We agree, as professional leaders, to recognize and respect each other’s competence, backgrounds and experience.

We agree to the proper and timely flow of information and promote and encourage open, respectful and confidential communication.

We agree that all attempts will be made to address concerns, criticisms and conflicts internally and confidentially before they will be discussed in an open forum.

We will not permit personal bias, prejudices or personal agendas to influence our decisions.

We agree to be open to compromise as we work for the mutual benefit and well-being of the Bureau of Police, its members and the community.

Political situations and personality conflicts will arise in any law enforcement agency and threaten to undermine even the strongest of labor-management relationships. Heated contract discussions may also even produce hostility and contentious relationships between the law

enforcement officers' bargaining unit and the city. However, well thought out, meaningful rules of engagement between the law enforcement executive and the police union leadership can engender a cooperative agreement capable of withstanding even the most tumultuous of times.

The successful law enforcement agency today understands the importance of memorializing its values, ethics and commitment to the community. Today's clearly outstanding law enforcement agency goes one step beyond and has also documented its commitment to internal professionalism by establishing a solid labor-management relationship through the publication of an *agree to disagree* philosophy.

Russ Leach
Chief of Police (retired)
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POLITICS OF LABOR-MANAGEMENT RELATIONS

When we look at the differences in labor-management relations between the private sector and the public sector, we find a very important ingredient that really makes them dissimilar--politics.

In the private sector there is stable management; CEO's are selected a year to two years, and sometimes several years, before the existing CEO is set to retire. All decisions are made at the management level with the primary consideration being the bottom line of the company. Once the management decisions are made and implemented, the unions must live with them, litigate or strike. Everybody knows if the company can't make any money, they all lose.

In the public sector, things are quite different. The organization is responsible to provide services, not products, and even though in recessionary times there may be less officers, most will still have a job and the taxpayers will foot the bill--regardless of whether or not the organization is successful. In most police departments, top management is not stable. The average tenure of a police chief is less than four years--even less in the larger cities--and there is usually little transition planning. When the chief leaves there is a hurried executive search process to find a replacement, which results in the department being rudderless for six months to a year, or until a new person comes on board. If the new chief is from outside the organization, he or she will need another six months before they completely understand the organization.

Unlike the private sector, the chief executive officer of a police department is not the final decision-maker on labor-management issues. Even in cities where the chief of police is a charter department head and makes final hiring, firing and operational policy decisions in the organization, they still do not decide labor issues. All police chiefs have an appointing authority or oversight board that can be supportive, meddling, or a combination thereof, with the department's management. Additionally, municipalities are governed by a vast array of policies and regulations at the city, county, state and federal level. Unions know that if they cannot obtain what they want from the chief, they can lobby the mayor, city council and city manager to get the desired result. Next, they can go to the legislature and get state laws passed, which override city policies. In Minneapolis, a state law limits the number of deputy chief and inspector positions the Minneapolis Police Department can have. In New York State, the police unions got the legislature to pass a law that provided tenure to anyone who had been a detective longer than three years. Because of the sensitivity and responsibility of the position, the detective's were previously appointed and removed by the police commissioners.

Unlike corporate boards, people in state and municipal elected positions often do not remain in these positions for long periods. When one group or individual--who might have been supportive of the chief--is not reelected, the new person will come to power and the union may be able to manipulate them to protect union interests. They do this in a variety of ways, through the endorsement process and by providing campaign funds and membership volunteers to support the candidate(s) most likely to support their interests.

UNION PRESIDENT—ELECTED POSITION

The police chief should remember that the union president is elected and that he/she has a constituency to whom they must respond. In the politics of labor-management relations, the union official will often have to publicly posture against the administration, even though they may be working quietly with the administration to resolve issues. The union president must respond to the perceived needs of their constituency so that he/she can maintain their position and get reelected. The chief should clearly understand the politics involved within the union itself, as all of the board members are elected--and most want to get reelected. Union leadership must, at times, respond to the radicals in their organization. In addition, the union will respond forcefully to an emotional issue, particularly if it is perceived to involve officer safety.

It is better to have a sharp union adversary than a dull union president. If the union president does not comprehend the administration's viewpoint, he will not be able to effectively bargain with them, let alone reach reasonable agreements. If the union president and the board are not powerful, they may also not be able to control their membership and deliver on agreements. If you have both of those situations with a union president, it presents one of the worst scenarios for labor relations.

On the other hand, if it is just a matter of education, the chief executive officer should encourage the union president and representative board members to appropriate management/leadership schools at the city's expense. A sharp union official, who also knows how to manage an organization, is an asset to the organization.

PROFILE COMMUNITY POLITICS

Every current and new police chief should profile the politics within the community. They can then identify the forces that have political influence and will respond to issues involving the police department. Once these groups have been identified the chief should open lines of communication and keep them informed about what the department is doing in their area of interest and why. This is critically important as it relates to labor-management issues that could negatively impact operational programs. The chief of police should be sure that all of the council members are fully aware of any controversial issue that may come up between the union and management, arming them with information *before* the union leadership calls. The first tip-off that the union is already at work is a phone call from a council member asking a question about an issue currently or potentially in dispute with the union. The chief should explain the situation thoroughly so that the council member understands what is happening and the issues involved.

Remember politicians in your community have no unique knowledge about law enforcement. Most are average citizens turned politicians, who got elected to serve their communities. With the exception of retired police executives and people who work within the system, most politicians, citizens and news reporters do not understand the complexities of the police management and labor relationship. Chiefs must keep their political leaders informed and current on all issues.

What every chief should do when they take over the helm (or even if they have been in the job for a while) is give a written, confidential, report every fifteen days to the mayor, city manager or police commission to whom they report. Outline the issues handled during that period and follow-up in subsequent reports on outstanding issues, including those in which union involvement is probable. Doing this will give the chief a clear and concise record of the issues that the boss was apprised of should a problem arise.

DEVELOPING A POLITICAL BASE

Police chiefs must carefully develop their own political base. Every successful police chief understands politicians. Recognize that everything you do and say may be perceived from a political viewpoint. Politicians listen to their constituency. Every chief must reach out to those constituencies and engage them. The chief should go to as many civic and other organization meetings when invited to speak or attend. The chief should reach out to public and private agencies, non-profits and others that routinely deal with the police department or respond to police department actions. Police leaders must develop friendships and support within these organizations, and with the residents of the city they are sworn to protect. If the community really knows and understands the chief; who he/she is and what they stand for, the ability of the union to obstruct the progress in the organization, or to get rid of the chief, will be minimized. Conversely, if the chief has not gone into the community and collaborated with other agencies, they are more likely to give credence to the rumors spread by those who do not support the department. It is important to remember that almost all citizens like and appreciate their police chief. The chief really has to go out of the way to convince them that they shouldn't. One way to guarantee problems is to stay in the ivory tower of the police administration building--particularly during difficult times--and hope the problem goes away.

TRUST

It goes without saying that a police chief must be sure that they have a trusting and close relationship with his or her boss, and that they respond to his/her individual needs and style. Generally, if the chief is working closely with their boss and performing professionally, they will be supported. However, never lose sight of the fact that the boss has bosses. The chief must work to ensure that a majority of the city council is supportive of the police leadership. The police chief executive must do everything possible, within ethical limits, to avoid creating issues that could cause the city manager to lose the council's support or the elected mayor to lose favor with the public. The chief must remember that even if the council member, mayor or boss is wrong in some initiative or intrusion that they made regarding the department, do not publicly embarrass them. You must remember that politicians need to save face, even when they, like you, make occasional mistakes. Even if totally right, always look for ways to help the council member, mayor or city manager save face with their constituency and at the same time, try to mend whatever problem developed. Politicians are like the unions, they have an elephant's memory--they don't forget.

Police chiefs must also remember to never get in the middle of council or commission politics. Be careful not to be drawn in to a dispute, between individual council members who will try to use you or the department to prove their point to get votes for or against proposals of

another council member or commissioner. The council member you helped may love you for it, but the one you didn't help or perceived you as favoring the other, will not forget it.

ENLISTING SUPPORT

Police chiefs who are new and even ones that have been in the job for a while, should find out who in the community comprise the 'kitchen cabinet.' These are the people who influence the boss and the boss' bosses. Every city has those powerful individuals who sit in the background, yet are able to get phone calls through immediately to the city manager or mayor, and who routinely advise those in power. It is important for the chief--wherever possible--to take the opportunity to work with these individuals and enlist their support and feedback on important issues. This can be done through the development of the Police Athletic League (PAL) Boards and Police Foundation Boards and/or to public/private sector collaborations of which the police department is a part. In this way, opportunities for regular contact with these individuals can be established. Most are active in their community and in various charitable organizations--not to mention being politically active.

To paraphrase Plato--*wise people, who don't participate, allow unwise people to determine their destiny*. Police chiefs must involve themselves with their city lobbyist as well as police association national, state and county chiefs. This enables the chief to stay current on regulatory and legal initiatives being considered by city council, county board, state legislature, or congress that could impact management's ability to operate the department and effectively provide public safety. This is especially important at the federal level. The chief executive should access and maintain close relationships with other organizations, such as the Federal Bureau of Investigation National Academy (Associates); International Association of Chiefs of Police; Police Executive Research Forum; National Organization of Black Law Enforcement Executives; National Sheriff's Association; and the Major Cities Chiefs. These organizations are routinely called upon to testify and keep track of bills being submitted to Congress.

An example is the proposed federal police officers bill of rights. Besides being aware of what is happening, the chief executive officer should be proactive in amending existing laws or developing legislation that will enhance public safety and the chief executive's ability to manage their organization. The examples listed previously are other reasons why the chief executive should develop relationships with the state legislature, particularly the ones representing their cities. Most state legislators appreciate the opportunity to talk with the police chiefs in their areas and to hear their concerns and opinions about law enforcement. The chief can provide ideas for legislation that would allow the legislator to be pro law enforcement and have the support of the law enforcement community.

Every police chief should see the city council members or commissioners regularly. Many times these individuals are uninformed on critical issues. The administration may have a way of sending information to them, or answering their questions, etc. The chief should become a friend with whom they enjoy an opportunity to speak with and can ask questions they wouldn't call specifically to ask. Certainly, in some forms of government, the chief must be careful not to violate the mayor/city manager/council relationship. That doesn't mean, however, the chief can't stick his/her head in the office of a council member and say 'hello,' or tell them about some incident that occurred in their district or ward and how it was dealt with. There are few things more embarrassing to a council member than to not be informed of a serious law enforcement issue in their district and get asked about it by a constituent. Many cities allow their precinct area

commanders to have direct dealings with the council members whose wards include those precincts. Establishing good relationships there can often stop other problems caused by lack of timely information. Of course, the commanders who are communicating with them must do so clearly and quickly about the inquiry and the response.

Remember there are no customers the chief executive officer shouldn't have a relationship with--even perceived adversaries. Occasionally chiefs will find themselves working with traditional adversaries. Politics makes strange bedfellows and so does progressive community policing and labor relations. Groups such as the public defender, the ACLU, Civilian Review Authority, and other organizations particular to your community that may be viewed upon as anti-police, anti-union, or anti-law enforcement shouldn't be excluded from those with whom you work with. It is often surprising to know how many things the chief might have in common with them and there will come a time when their support may be helpful in accomplishing a significant goal. Sometimes having them stay neutral and not joining the other side can be a positive.

IMPACT OF DECISIONS

Chiefs can find themselves in labor-management situations in which they have to make decisions on discipline, assignment, promotion and appointments that could be criticized as being racist, anti-gay, anti-women, etc. The union may take advantage of this opportunity. Chief executives should routinely scrutinize all transfer, appointment, and disciplinary recommendations to determine the impact of the decision. This is not to say that the recommendations should be changed. However, it may be a good idea to contact individuals in the affected communities and have a frank discussion about the action taken. Some routine decisions are time bombs, such as there are no women or people of color in certain units, or some are exclusively white or gay, and others are perceived as special interest, good old boy, etc. Were opportunities given to all members for a desirable assignment? If the chief executive is not careful, these issues could submarine the many positive things the department hopes to accomplish.

ESTABLISH POSITIVE RELATIONSHIPS WITH THE MEDIA

Every chief executive, new or old must develop positive relationships with the media and local editorial boards. These entities are the main venue to communicate the police message to the people in the community. Through the media, law enforcement management has the opportunity to establish and develop credibility not only in the community, but within the police organization. The police chief must work hard to develop this credibility with the media so that they will be less skeptical when serious issues arise. Some chiefs have regular meetings with all of the editors, producers, and reporters to talk about issues. Every department, no matter what size, should have a designated Public Information Officer, whose job is to keep the media informed about all police issues.

If the newspaper has a regular police reporter(s), the chief should go to lunch or meet with them every few months and *always* return their calls. Wherever possible, give them background information so that when information is released, the reporter will have the full

picture. If they can't be told something, efforts should be made to tell them why and then get the information to them as soon as possible. Introduce training for subordinates on how to deal with the media--don't keep it all in the front office. Never publicly take offense at what is printed or televised. Yes, there are unethical reporters, as in every profession, but they can be dealt with through their supervisors. Don't let emotion or personalities prevent you from being professional, regardless of the provocation.

Once the chief has established credibility with the local media, it will be much easier to deal with the delicate issues the department needs to have explained to the public. This is particularly true during contract negotiations, when the union may be looking for anything to put the chief in a bad light. Don't give the media opinions or become an expert in every criminal justice matter. Pick your issues and be sure they are relevant to the department's mission and the community. Don't pick fights with the union that are not relevant to the management issue at hand.

ETHICAL OBLIGATIONS

Lastly, the chief of police has an ethical mandate to the citizens, which they are sworn to protect and serve. It should be clear that when the best interest of the union members conflicts with the best interest of the citizens, the police chief is going to decide in favor of the citizens. This also encompasses the political dilemmas that could arise for the chief in not supporting some political initiative of the elected body. The chief has a responsibility to the citizen's public safety. If a political initiative is going to negatively impact that safety, the chief has an ethical obligation to make that known to the elective body. These initiatives often involve labor-management issues, where policy makers may unknowingly want to give away management rights. Every chief of police has to make those ethical decisions. When they come--and they will—he or she will have to deal with it. Doing the right thing is never easy.

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COMMUNICATIONS 101

One of the most seemingly simple things we do in life is communicate with other people. Yet the more you think about the art of communication, the subject becomes incredibly complex and clearly one of the things that most of us do poorly. Frequently, we are informed that we are misunderstood. Our credibility and intentions are questioned. At times our sincerity is questioned. We are criticized for being too harsh, too timid, too diplomatic, or even too blunt! The people we know best make these critical observations--before we even leave our own house--our wives, husbands, and children!

What most frequently gives our true message away is not our words, but the non-verbal aspect of communication! Certain facial expressions, the lifting of the eyebrows, a frown, a smile, the tone of our voice, and/or our eyes send a message that is contrary to what we said. Should the non-verbal and verbal messages differ, most people will judge the non-verbal expression to be most accurate. Since we have all conducted thousands of criminal suspect interviews, we know that most people find it difficult to lie non-verbally. Most outside law enforcement intuitively know this as well.

There are hundreds of ways we communicate. The way we dress, a gentle touch or a slap on the back, and our manners are examples of how we express our feelings, desires, and attitudes. My point is that our family, our police officers, the public, and our friends all form their opinion of us by interpreting our verbal and non-verbal communications. There is no doubt most of us have many personalities, one for the home, one for the office, and one for our friends. The underpinnings of these personalities surface quite clearly with our use of verbal and non-verbal language. The most successful people are those who make every effort to have just one personality.

If the purpose of this handbook is for a chief to try and forge a better relationship with the leaders of employee organizations, then you should start with an honest self-examination of your feelings about these people and how these feelings have found expression in your communications with them in the past. Naturally, this relationship will depend on whether you personally like them, whether you respect them, and whether you think it is important to have a trustworthy relationship. After the self-review, you must decide if you need to change your methods of communication so that you are better understood. I should warn you that human nature is going to tell you that you are just fine and the rest of the world is screwed up! Well if you can get by that self-induced narcotic, then the following are suggestions you may wish to consider on the path to self-improvement and success as a chief.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

There are three basic principles to follow to be a successful leader in a police organization. First, the chief must know, believe, and live the core values of the department. Thereafter, all comments, written statements, and personal behavior, on and off the job, should be consistent with these basic values. Second, you must know that anything you say or do within the department is known to most officers in a short period of time. If you think you can do or say things that will remain confidential, you are wrong. Third, you must be consistent with your

message. You cannot communicate ideas, or feelings, to your secretary, a union leader, a city councilman, a deputy chief, patrolmen, or the media unless all of the messages are the same. One way to ensure your words match your thoughts is not to say anything to anyone on the job that you would not want printed in the newspaper the following day. Truth you can always handle, however, it is a different story when you are forced to admit your words were two-faced or hypocritical.

INTERNAL COMMUNICATION

Most chiefs do not communicate directly with the union on a regular basis. Rather they communicate with the department's officers through direct oral communication or by other means, such as a department newsletter, closed circuit television, memorandum, or by *making the rounds*. In terms of winning the troops' hearts and minds, this places any chief in a commanding position in terms of influence within the department. When you have control over the internal communication within an organization it is easy and effective to deliver messages regarding values, policies, and/or other problems of interest to the officers. It is the wise chief who uses a variety of internal communications to quell misinformation, rumor, and false impressions among employees. Should you believe your department is too small or too large to use the available means of communication to extend your influence, you are making a mistake. There is always an appropriate forum available to a chief to communicate with the other members of the department. It should always be remembered that you cannot be a leader of any organization unless you know the organization's values and have the ability to effectively communicate, and regularly reinforce, these concepts to all employees.

An example of this concept would be the use of an appropriate form of communication by the chief to either instill, or reinforce, certain department policies and guidelines regarding the use of force. There is no greater need in law enforcement than for an officer to know, understand, and practice the legitimate use of force. While each officer has to take responsibility for the improper use of force, I would argue that the chief--and the entire management staff--also has a responsibility if they have failed to properly educate and train officers. Unfortunately, when improper force is used we are usually satisfied with just blaming the officer without examining whether our failure to teach, coach, or direct were also a causative factors in the incident.

Properly used the above formal means of communication places the chief in a commanding position of influence. Far more so, I might add, than the union leader who does not have access to this type or scope of internal communication. If a union leader has more influence within a department than the chief, then the chief has ignored all the principles and means of effective communication.

However, there are other ways a chief can communicate with the department's officers that are far more simple than the formal means already set forth. First, any chief should have a policy that allows an officer to see him on any matter at a convenient time. Second, a chief should arrange his/her work schedule to allow time to ride-along with officers on all shifts. In particular, I would suggest some of these ride-alongs occur on Christmas, Easter, or other holidays when the chief's presence is least expected. This sends a strong non-verbal message to the members of the department that you care about them. Third, the chief should attend, or

direct, a roll call or training exercise at least once a month. If roll call and training are not a department routine, then the chief should occasionally be present during a shift change to engage the officers in conversation.

Take every opportunity to pat an officer on the back for a job well done, as praise is a powerful motivational tool. Properly, and not overly, dispensed praise can engender a powerful and lasting loyalty. Make a point to know, if humanly possible, the names of your officers' wives. While this may not be possible for chiefs in our largest departments, there are many ways in which the computer can be of assistance in tracking names, dates, and events. A note from the chief on a significant event in an officer's life, such as a birth of a child, the death of a parent, or perhaps a promotion--even if computer generated--has tremendous impact on an officer's impression of the chief.

The police chief should have a monthly meeting with the union leader to discuss matters of mutual concern. One successful method used by former Police Commissioner Michael Codd, New York, was an informal breakfast meeting with a union president. This meeting, away from the department, was held under the rule of total confidentiality. This ground rule gave both the Commissioner and the union president an opportunity to discuss employment issues candidly. Often times, the results of these informal conversations were that serious concerns were settled before they became contentious. While this technique might not fit your management style, a modification of this method may produce desired results.

Police chiefs who understand the role of the union within the department recognize that union leaders need a "victory" once in a while. A chief should never be reluctant to recognize the role and contributions of the union within the department. This can be done publicly through internal and external communications. Giving credit to the union for their role in obtaining better equipment, improving safety and working conditions, and making the department a better place to work should be done--when deserved. Recognizing the accomplishments of the union publicly reverses the *them versus us* mentality, which has affected many departments in the past. To serve the public well, both the union and police management must understand that the primary objective of both organizations is to protect the public. If either side is forced by mutual animosity to suspend this objective, then both sides and the public lose regardless of who is right.

EXTERNAL COMMUNICATION

It has not been that long ago when a police executive had little contact with the community, politicians, or business leaders. Over the past ten years this has changed. At the present time, chiefs are actively engaged in external communication with a variety of individuals. This change was spawned by the fact that some union leaders had developed a strategy to become more influential with politicians, thus bypassing the traditional negotiation method of obtaining increased benefits. It is most likely that the advent of community-based policing was the most significant reason police chiefs left their office to build support for new and innovative policing methods. Whatever the case, most chiefs now spend an inordinate amount of time out of the office building community support for the department.

I have no particular quarrel with the chief leaving the office to engage in external communication, provided the message is consistent with the core values and objectives of the

department. Taking the time to brief local politicians on problems within the department, seeking support for new policing programs, or discussing budgetary problems is a wise use of time. Likewise, spending time with newspaper editors, business leaders, and community organizations is also good public relations. Of course, one would not discuss sensitive personnel problems or budgetary problems with these groups. The objective is to build support for the department and you within the community.

Community support for the department and the chief is critical should the union create problems. All chiefs should realize that most union leaders are actively involved in politics. In recent times some unions have supported local candidates by either volunteering campaign workers or direct donations. The payoff for union support in the election is usually the candidate's future support for union causes. Should a situation arise within the department where the union's political influence has to be trumped by the chief, then the chief has to have more influence over the political process than the union. This influence has to extend beyond politics, per se, to business leaders and citizens, who in turn exert political pressure on the governing body. Acquiring this amount of community influence takes years of hard work and dedication.

The payoff to the chief and the department may well be significant community support for law enforcement programs, increased wages and benefits for the officers, adequate equipment and money for training, and a better understanding by citizens of law enforcement's role and limitations. In addition, should the union take an unjustifiable job action, or perhaps issue a vote of no confidence in the chief, the union will find it exceedingly difficult to succeed with the job action or in the removal of the chief.

CONCLUSION

Obtaining the support of the employees of a law enforcement agency, the elected officials, and the community requires a maximum utilization of the various means of communication by the chief. One does not have to be glamorous, or a genius, to be an effective communicator. All it takes is consistency, honesty, and a clear message, which outlines the problem and proposed solution. If a chief takes the time to reach out to both the employees of the organization and the various elements of the community on contemporary police issues there is no way an employee organization could garner enough influence to obstruct the legitimate department management. It is only when a chief fails to communicate with his or her employees and various sectors of the community that troubles begin. Given this vacuum-like atmosphere it is only natural the union will attempt to fill the void—and, in doing so they will most likely gain undue influence over department management.

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CREDIBILITY: WHAT WE ALL WANT BUT STRUGGLE TO ACHIEVE

THE CHIEF'S TOOL FOR SUCCESS

The importance of credibility to the police executive's success cannot be overemphasized. As the very foundation for effective leadership, credibility is the *single most important determinant* of whether a leader will be followed over time. Sadly, without credibility, today's police chief is unlikely to survive in the job long enough to see his or her organization achieve its objectives.

EARNING CREDIBILITY THROUGH POSITIVE RELATIONSHIPS

The process of earning credibility is a challenging one that, for the police executive, requires the constant building of positive relationships both inside and outside the organization. The chief who has been successful in developing these important, positive relationships and thus enjoys a high degree of credibility will be able to serve as an effective, respected leader when difficult situations arise, such as complex personnel, disciplinary or labor-related issues; or sudden, intense media attention following certain police actions.

It is no wonder, therefore, that police executives generally agree that building and maintaining successful relationships and high credibility levels are two of the most critical aspects of their jobs.

THE NEW LEADER'S PRIMARY TASK: ESTABLISHING CREDIBILITY

A change in leadership within the police organization can be either a negative, traumatic event or an uplifting, positive one. For long-term success, the incoming leader must establish credibility as soon as possible.

A person assuming command from within the organization will bring to the new position a record of accomplishment and leadership that will influence the number of followers—as well as the speed with which these followers—will come together to complete the organization's mission. If the new chief has previously demonstrated integrity, confidence and effective leadership, he or she will, at a minimum, be given an opportunity to succeed. Hopefully, the leader will also be given the encouragement and support to guarantee success.

The new leader who has been selected from outside the organization must also establish credibility as soon as possible. However, the initial perception of this executive is drawn from different quarters. He or she may come with an agenda based on research, consultant reports, direction from the city manager/commission or media reports. It is important that the new chief's agenda be flexible enough to allow for the possibility of amending or replacing of many of those things initially thought to be important.

In particular, the timetable for task accomplishment must be flexible enough for the new executive to develop positive relationships and establish credibility with his or her entire constituency, which extends well beyond the general public to include city officials, other city agencies, the business community, schools, churches, and perhaps most importantly, the agency's own staff.

KEY FACTORS IMPACTING POSITIVE RELATIONSHIPS AND CREDIBILITY

Unquestionably, regardless of how the new chief achieves the position, it is clear that his or her credibility level has much to do with the relationships established upon assuming command as well as those that are subsequently created, maintained and cultivated.

Three key factors impact the leader's capabilities with regard to building positive relationships and credibility, including his or her ability to: 1) develop and communicate *vision*--- a sense of direction for the organization; 2) involve *key stakeholders* in decision making; and 3) demonstrate *personal persistence*. These factors represent a three-phase strategy for success not only for the executive but also for the organization as a whole.

Developing Credibility Through Vision. People expect their leader to have a sense of direction and a concern for the organization's future. However, they will not always agree with their leader's ideas concerning the organization's direction. It is critical for the police chief, particularly one just assuming command, to realize that constituents will not necessarily share his or her vision (goals and expectations) for the department.

In their book, *Credibility*, James M. Kouzes and Barry Z. Posner note that leadership is a reciprocal relationship between those who choose to lead and those who decide to follow. In the context of today's law enforcement organization, the success of such a relationship requires the chief to develop a *credible, tangible* vision that can inspire constituents to *decide to follow*—to accomplish significant goals and objectives both for themselves and for the organization. Such a vision must instill in people the belief that by working together they will be treated fairly and, at the same time, achieve significant career and personal goals.

But what if the chief lacks the credibility to convince others to follow—to share in the vision and be willing to work collaboratively to achieve it? Such a leader faces significant obstacles--ones that must be overcome through a consistent striving to:

- Develop positive relationships by displaying trustworthiness and integrity in treating all employees and other constituencies fairly and professionally;
- listen attentively to ideas from every corner, while delegating widely throughout the organization;
- act as an ethical, effective decision maker and problem solver; and
- “sell”—communicate to all constituencies his or her vision, as well as the agency's programs, ideas, and the competence of its employees.

Involvement of Key Stakeholders. Police chiefs often make decisions without the benefit of a sounding board or personal counsel, with results that may range from simple errors or inconsistencies and the loss of potentially valuable input to—at the extreme—major controversies that can even result in votes of “no confidence.”

On the other hand, leaders who seek input from a wide array of sources can reap a myriad of benefits for their agencies. For example, the chief who includes command staff in decision making is taking positive steps to provide a training mechanism for these officers, reduce the number and severity of internal errors or inconsistencies, and ensure that these employees have ownership of and can be held accountable for any decision in which they are involved.

In addition, the chief who makes the effort to include the external forces that impact the agency’s success may actually prevent much of the undermining that paves the way for votes of no confidence (a move that often seems to lower the chief’s credibility to rock bottom). For example, the chief can take steps to ensure that recreational activities are structured to involve not only sworn and support staff and volunteers, but also their family members. Through such a simple effort, the leader can influence the manner in which the organization, its motivations and its leader are viewed by the people who support, or correct, the perceptions of the staff responsible for carrying out the vision and mission.

Despite the most positive steps, problems may often still occur within the department, from simple errors to the most extreme controversies that even threaten a vote of no confidence. Regardless of the magnitude of agency problems, the chief needs to take the “high moral ground” rather than succumb to rationalizations or become angry. The tendency may be strong to strike back verbally or to offer excuses. However, thinking the issues out carefully and offering a measured response that includes acknowledgment of the error and a pledge to avoid the same path again enhances the leader’s credibility and provides a valuable learning process at all levels of the organization.

It is important to remember that, while the leader’s credibility may be forged by a few, it is perceived by many. The greater a chief’s involvement with key stakeholders both inside and outside the organization, the more likely he or she is to achieve the organization’s vision and maintain high credibility.

Personal Persistence. The third factor impacting a chief’s ability to maintain high credibility involves his or her ability to persevere—to demonstrate *personal persistence*.

Many police chiefs nationwide have experienced long, successful careers. However, the hard statistic remains that the average chief’s tenure is *less than five years*. How, then, can the chief of the year 2000 enhance his or her chances for establishing credibility and providing effective, long-term leadership of an efficient, well-respected department?

Today’s chief can go far toward being the architect of his or her own success by persisting in *communicating* his or her vision, *sticking to the plan of action* that has been widely discussed and broadly accepted, and continually *reinforcing* the agency’s objectives through constant follow up, communication and support.

To accomplish these steps, the chief must maintain high visibility and be openly communicative and frequently accessible to employees.

HIGH VISIBILITY KEY TO SUCCESS

Assuming the leadership role should be perceived as the opportunity to advance the professionalism of policing and enhance both the careers of employees and the interests of the community they serve. These objectives cannot be accomplished behind a desk or isolated from employees and other constituents.

Most new chiefs pledge to make frequent roll call appearances and engage in ride-alongs. Some are even committed to open-door policies, especially with regard to labor union personnel. If these pledges are both logical and reasonable, why do most chiefs find them so hard to keep? One answer often lies in the fact that chiefs tend to underestimate the amount of time the new job will take. In addition to day-to-day departmental responsibilities, the chief often receives seemingly endless requests to speak before service clubs, neighborhood and/or church groups, etc. These engagements can nearly take over the leader's professional and even personal schedules.

Since chiefs often receive beneficial input from these outside groups, they may enjoy addressing them more than they like speaking before some groups of their own officers. This may be particularly true when the latter groups consist of cynical, graveyard-shift officers who do not seem to believe a word their leader is saying—or worse—ask questions about “inconsistencies” they have noticed over the past couple of years.

However, it goes without saying that interaction with employees should be high on the chief's list each day. While he or she is unlikely to forget the importance of the mayor or the city council or the warm feedback received from appreciative neighborhood groups, the leader's credibility and long-term future are dependent on his or her commitment to regular, meaningful visits with small employee gatherings in all segments of the organization.

In addition to meeting regularly with employees, the police leader seeking credibility needs to maintain high visibility among state and national chiefs' organizations. Committing time to meet with other chiefs in his or her home state as well as on the national level to learn what other departments are doing and to identify practices that work well can be an important investment for the home agency. Employees have the right to expect their leader to be current on contemporary and futuristic approaches to police service delivery outside their home agency.

COMMUNICATION AND ACCESSIBILITY CONVEY SENSE OF TEAMWORK

Communication between the chief and employees can take a variety of forms, including personal, one-on-one conversations or written messages; formal or informal presentations to groups or the entire department; or non-verbal messages that can encourage staff and convey a sense of teamwork and togetherness.

Through face-to-face, personal communication with employees, the chief can relay a sense of intimacy and of belonging to the organization—a feeling that there is room for everyone, including those who may have fallen into disfavor with previous administrations. In many instances, just one personal, positive comment from the chief can provide encouragement for an employee, as well as a sense of security, well being, personal identity and self-worth.

Employees who feel good about themselves are likely to support the department’s overall vision and mission. Thus, many chiefs have found it beneficial to maintain a sufficiently open schedule to allow for an occasional hallway conversation, a word of encouragement, or an impromptu visit with a patrol officer at work offsite. As previously mentioned, many chiefs pledge to participate in ride-alongs, which serve as useful tools for assessing the department’s pulse.

In addition to engaging in one-on-one, personal conversations with employees, it is important for the chief to be the one who addresses larger employee groups or the entire department when important messages are to be delivered. Since credibility begins and ends with the person, not the message, the chief should ensure that, whenever possible, it is he or she, rather than a subordinate, who delivers such messages.

Effective non-verbal communication can also be an important tool for the chief to convey a sense of belonging and inclusion to staff at all levels. For example, the chief who wears the uniform regularly or periodically and ensures that senior command staff do so is communicating that he or she has as much pride in the “colors” as do employees.

CONCLUSION

The law enforcement executive adds to or detracts from his or her credibility every day. The leader who has the greatest potential for achieving and maintaining consistently high levels of credibility is one who is able to establish positive relationships, develop and communicate a vision for the department, involve key stakeholders in decision making, and display personal persistence in carrying out the vision.

The chief who lacks the credibility to convince others to share in his or her vision—to work collaboratively to achieve it—faces significant obstacles that must be overcome. The following positive steps will assist such a chief toward building the positive relationships that are necessary to establish credibility:

- Display trustworthiness and integrity in treating all employees and other constituencies fairly and professionally;
- listen attentively from every corner; delegating widely throughout the organization;
- act as an ethical, effective decision maker and problem solver, constantly striving to “sell” his or vision to all constituencies.

Developing positive relationships will facilitate the successful sharing of the chief's vision. Involving key stakeholders in decision making and maintaining open communication and high visibility with all levels of the organization will ensure the sustaining of these positive relationships and the credibility needed for success.

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AVOIDING A VOTE OF NO CONFIDENCE (AND SURVIVING IF ONE OCCURS)

INTRODUCTION

Many police chiefs today are suffering from a lack of confidence—the confidence of their own employees. During the past year, a number of these leaders received votes of no confidence from their labor organizations; and some now see themselves as victims—blamed for the countless maladies plaguing the law enforcement agency and the community as a whole.

These chiefs perceive themselves as highly visible, vulnerable targets of discontent, caught in crossfire between politicians, the public, various interest and pressure groups and their own officers. To be sure, the police chief's job can at times be a thankless one. The following folk tale illustrates the dilemma in which some chiefs view themselves today:

There once was a police chief who lost his job and then found that he was rejected wherever he applied because he was either over- or under-qualified. Totally dejected and becoming desperate, he eventually landed a job with a local carnival. His task was a simple one: to stick his head through a hole in a tent wall and have people throw baseballs at him—three baseballs for one dollar.

Two police officers patrolling the carnival observed their ex-chief and remarked, "What a sad commentary—one day a police chief, the next day a target for people throwing baseballs." The officers watched for a few minutes and finally approached their former chief on one of his breaks, saying, "Man, this must be a tough job." To which the chief answered, "Well, yes and no. You see, it's not the baseballs—you can see them coming and have an opportunity to dodge and duck them. The really tough part of the job is the dart game that's going on in the back."

So it is with the real-life police chief who is an exposed, susceptible target for both sides. He or she usually does an excellent job dodging and ducking the baseballs being thrown by the politicians, the public and the various interest and pressures groups. The really tough part of the job is when the employees and their unions begin throwing darts on the other side. And the job becomes toughest when that most devastating dart of all is thrown—the vote of no confidence.

CHIEF'S ROLE IN PRODUCTIVE LABOR-MANAGEMENT RELATIONS

Throughout the labor-relations process, the role of the police executive is a crucial one that needs to be thoroughly understood if a fruitful labor-management relationship is to be achieved and maintained. Once the organization has recognized the union, the chief must be prepared to devote more time and attention to labor relations in general, and the union in particular. He or she must become educated about what is undoubtedly a difficult arena and be willing to work toward rapport with employees representing the union.

The chief who understands his or her role in the labor-relations process is likely to be one who deals open-handedly and recognizes fully the union's right to exist and to represent its members' wishes. Such a chief is also willing to commit to a harmonious relationship—bearing in mind that the union members are still employees.

Indeed, failure of a police executive to participate fully in the labor relations process and to recognize and communicate the need for an open, harmonious relationship with the union may itself be the root of the no-confidence vote, often even triggering it.

PURPOSE OF THE NO-CONFIDENCE VOTE

During the past twenty years, police unions have come to realize that power is derived from politics; as a result, they have become less militant and more politically active in efforts to achieve their objectives. Most relatively large police unions now have formal political action committees (PACs) and are involved in endorsing and lobbying local, state and national candidates to influence these politicians on pertinent law enforcement issues as well as to obtain improved wages and benefits. Union members have also become politically astute in using the media to seek support from the public on such concerns.

In line with their growing political shrewdness, unions have found the no-confidence vote to be one of the most popular, powerful, effective political tools at their disposal, using this means increasingly to apply political pressure to influence: 1) wages and the negotiation process; 2) policy and decision making; and 3) removal of the police chief.

Influencing Wages and the Negotiation Process

Unions threatening or actually taking votes of no confidence against the police chief often hope the resulting negative publicity will be embarrassing to the elected official who appointed the chief and will thus serve as leverage for obtaining higher wages or breaking a deadlock in negotiations.

Influencing Policy and Decision Making

Unions want to influence and have input into the police department's policy and decision making. If this input is denied, votes of no confidence have often been used to gain the chief's and top management's attention to communicate the union's frustration, thereby hoping to force the chief to listen to its demands.

Removal of the Chief

The no-confidence vote is the ultimate vehicle, after all other attempts have failed, to communicate to the community and the city management that the union perceives the police chief as incompetent, disinterested, non-communicative and/or uncaring. Unions have often taken no-confidence votes for the specific purpose of requesting that the chief be removed from office because of his or her perceived lack of leadership. When a no-confidence vote occurs, the chief should determine immediately why the vote was taken. Is the vote a political ploy to influence negotiations or decision making or is the union actually attempting to oust him or her?

IMPACT OF THE VOTE OF NO CONFIDENCE

A city councilman was recently quoted as commenting that he saw the vote of no confidence as nothing more than a negotiation ploy on the union's part. "It's all part of the game, and I don't think the vote is particularly meaningful," he said.

While there are no doubt others who share this councilman's view, most observers see a vote of no confidence as a critical, disruptive event in the lives of the chief, the organization, and the community as a whole. Such votes often have harsh consequences, with approximately fifty percent of the chiefs involved losing their jobs either through voluntary or forced resignation. A 1991 study by the FBI National Executive Institute Associates revealed that over a five-year period there were 35 such votes; of these, half of the chiefs involved were removed from office. There is no recent information to suggest that today's chiefs are any less vulnerable to losing their jobs under these circumstances.

In addition to the negative impact a vote of no confidence generally has on the chief professionally, this action can be so demoralizing as to place an intense strain on him or her that extends to the entire family. "My family's getting upset and it's kind of snowballing. I just said 'the heck with it,'" reported one chief who resigned after receiving a no-confidence vote. Another chief wrote in his letter of resignation: "Due to the strain caused by the vote of no confidence against me, which has affected both myself and my family, I find this to be an appropriate action."

It is easy to say that no-confidence votes are just union negotiation ploys, but the chief targeted by this "ultimate dart" faces more than just acute embarrassment and the inevitable blow to his or her self-esteem and morale. This leader also faces a fifty-percent risk of losing his or her job.

CAUSES OF THE VOTE OF NO CONFIDENCE

In most cases, a vote of no confidence is saying more than, "We want the chief replaced." It is more than likely saying,

We, the union members, would like you, the chief, to take a more responsive posture on certain issues; and we feel this is the only way that we can communicate, both publicly and internally, our displeasure over the policy decisions and other forms of action that have been taken.

While there are probably as many causes for as there are votes of no confidence, most reasons cited for these actions can be grouped into three broad categories: lack of *leadership*, lack of *communication* and lack of *support*—or caring for employees

Lack of Leadership

Typical comments voiced as reasons for taking a no-confidence vote are: "We're like a ship without a rudder; you really can't tell which direction we're supposed to be going." "The biggest questions we have are about the chief's integrity, honesty and character; he certainly isn't interested in solving any of ours or the department's problems." "The chief has demonstrated a

lack of leadership and support by his failure to pursue and speak out on the economic and job needs of his officers.”

Comments of this nature indicate that votes of no confidence are, in essence, the union’s way of saying:

We need a leader—a spokesperson—to speak out publicly on issues that are affecting the day-to-day agency operations. If you, the chief, will not be that leader—that spokesperson—then we, the union, will fill the void and the vacuum that we perceive has been created—or get a new chief.

What is this saying to the police executive who **does not** speak out publicly on issues affecting the efficient operation of the agency and the valid concerns of the officer in the street...and who **does not** set and define the organization’s direction...and who **is not** above reproach—a person of integrity? It is clear that such a chief can expect the ultimate dart—a vote of no confidence.

Lack of Communication

In addition to lack of leadership, many votes of no confidence result from what is essentially a communications problem between the chief and the union members. Comments heard in this arena include: “It’s the chief’s way or the highway!” “We are told that we cannot voice our opinions or concerns about administrative personnel or their practices.” “This seems to be a totalitarian philosophy not conducive to good working morale.” “We’re the ones out here on the street doing the work, and no one listens to us.”

These union members are speaking loudly and clearly—***they want to have input into the organization’s policy and decision making process.*** The chief who denies this employee input by failing to practice good management principles can expect the union to take a vote of no confidence, or at a minimum, demand this employee input at the bargaining table.

Lack of Support or Caring for Employees

Perhaps most devastating to the department morale is the no-confidence vote that occurs because employees perceive that the chief simply **does not care.**

When officers believe that no one in the community or the local government, including the chief, care enough about them to listen to their complaints and correct the deficiencies at the root of these complaints, accusations such as these are commonly heard: “The chief doesn’t show any support for the officers; he has got to stop trying to pacify everybody and start standing up more for the guys who stick their necks out every night.” “The chief is aloof and dictatorial and has been unfair in promotions and discipline.” “He absolutely does not care about the officers in this department.” “He has no loyalty to the police department.”

The chief needs to be keenly aware of and respond appropriately to such officers, who long for recognition and think they deserve it. Left to continue complaining bitterly among themselves, such officers often decide simply to seek attention and recognition and “get back” at the chief through a vote of no confidence.

THE DART IS THROWN: WHAT SHOULD THE CHIEF DO?

Too many chiefs are at a loss—simply do not know what to do—when they receive a vote of no confidence. It is important for the leader to understand, however, that his or her reaction upon hearing the news is not only crucial to survival, but it can actually be much more important than the vote itself.

Occasionally, as bizarre as it seems, a chief could look at a no-confidence vote against him or her as a “vote of confidence.” The leader who has been hired to reinstate discipline and restore department accountability may receive a no-confidence vote by the union that is actually perceived by the city administration as a step in the right direction. If the union is seen as “whining” or complaining for unjustified reasons—and the chief is portrayed as doing the right thing—the no-confidence vote can backfire on the union and essentially provide support for the chief and the community.

In general, however, when a chief is threatened with or actually receives a vote of no confidence, there are a number of questions that he or she needs to ask: Was the vote valid? What is the cause of the vote? What is its purpose? What does the union want to achieve by it? What did I as chief do or fail to do to deserve the vote? What do I do now that I have received this vote? Should I ignore it? Should I fight it? What is the impact of the vote on my job? What can I learn from this experience to avoid any further such votes? What can I do to restore my employees’ and the union’s confidence in me?

Ascertain the Vote’s Validity

As a first step, the chief needs to know if the vote itself is valid before deciding on any action. This is not the time to overreact if the union has threatened a vote and does not actually have the necessary support or if the vote taken does not truly reflect the attitudes or the majority of eligible voters. Therefore, the chief should determine as soon as possible how many employees (union members) participated in the vote and how many were eligible to participate. Of the votes cast, how many expressed no confidence?

The chief also needs to determine if there is some validity to the reason for the vote. Have, in fact, employees been treated unfairly or without respect? Has the chief failed to be open in communicating with officers or to show support? If a chief is to be successful in surviving a no-confidence vote, he or she must learn the answers to these questions quickly and understand how these answers will help to set the stage for the agency’s return to a productive labor-management relationship.

In addition to addressing important questions, this is the time for the chief to acknowledge and correct mistakes, promise to solve the problems cited, and take other appropriate action as necessary. The chief who admits mistakes and promises to fix them is taking major, positive steps toward restoring personal credibility. In contrast, the chief who denies mistakes and refuses to recognize problems is unlikely to achieve or restore fruitful, harmonious labor-management relations.

When it appears that there is no validity for the vote of no confidence, or that the allegations for the vote are false or misleading, the chief must clarify the situation immediately. The leader cannot afford to let the union mold and shape his or her image in the media with

inaccurate information. The chief must take an unequivocal stand by setting the record straight and actively defending his or her own character and practices, or risk not only a loss of credibility, but eventually, the job.

Avoid Becoming Emotional

The best advice to give a police chief who has received a vote of no confidence is simply this: ***Don't take it personally—don't get emotionally involved!*** Of course, such advice is almost impossible to follow. Your employees have announced publicly that they do not have confidence in you as their leader; false accusations may have been made; you are embarrassed and somewhat demoralized; your family, friends and boss are looking for some explanation; and your feelings are hurt—***but remember—don't take it personally!***

At this moment, the chief usually wants to lash out at his accusers with some derogatory remarks and take his or her own vote of no confidence against the union and the involved employees. Instead, however, the leader must recognize and control these emotions and react professionally by staying above the fray, addressing the issues without making personal attacks. The beleaguered chief would be well advised to heed the words of that great philosopher—Pogo—who once said: “I am careful of the words I say to keep them soft and sweet, for I never know from day to day which ones I'll have to eat.”

Maintain High Visibility

There is a tendency on the part of some chiefs who receive votes of no confidence to withdraw and maintain a low profile. *These are the chiefs who usually lose their jobs.* As difficult as it is for the chief, he or she must be seen and heard discussing the issues openly both internally and externally. The chief who is inaccessible, especially during periods of crisis, cannot possibly expect to be perceived as trustworthy or credible. Thus, this is the time for the chief to be as visible as possible, circulating within the department and with the city administration, defending himself or herself in a positive, professional manner, if necessary, and showing everyone that he or she cares about the employees and the department.

STRATEGIES FOR AVOIDING VOTES OF NO CONFIDENCE

The police executive who focuses on positive efforts to avoid threats or actual votes of no confidence, is, at the same time, generally setting the groundwork for fostering long-term labor-management cooperation within his or her agency. The leader needs to realize, however, that in some instances, no-confidence votes will occur or be threatened regardless of any action or inaction on the chief's part or how he or she is perceived by employees. The chief is not always the primary target of the vote. For example, one officer confided that, “just the threat of a vote of no confidence got some attention and response to our concerns from the city. The officers got everything they wanted (in negotiations) because the no-confidence vote would have been a tremendous embarrassment.”

When the union uses the no-confidence vote in this manner—as a political ploy to influence negotiations, there is little that the chief can do to avoid it.

The chief also has little control over a no-confidence vote when the action is being driven by incompetent union leadership. A chief's worst nightmare is to have an inept union leader who

cannot control the militant actions of a few members or who takes reckless steps for his or her own self-grandisement. Such a union leader may organize no-confidence votes simply to boost his or her own ego or to help ensure reelection by demonstrating fortitude to stand up to the chief and the city administration.

Thus, the chief needs to be aware that there are certain instances in which he or she can do little to avoid threats or actual votes of no confidence. For the most part, however, there is much that the leader can do to facilitate smooth, harmonious agency operations. The following six strategies, applied consistently, will provide the groundwork for productive labor-management relations:

Strategy Number One: Speak Out On Behalf of Your Employees

The police chief's job is an extremely complex, often stressful one, as evidenced by the short tenure for many major city chiefs. These leaders live in a political world; yet, they are constantly reminded that they should not be politicians. Thus caught in a very real management dilemma, chiefs must try to satisfy two usually opposing contingencies: the city administration, which demands that they be part of the management team and help present a unified front—and the union or employee organization, which demands their visible support for its goals.

Despite this dilemma, the chief needs to show ongoing, consistent concern for his or her employees; it is merely good common sense to do so. He or she must show sensitivity to their needs—what they want and how they feel—and must act on this information by speaking out publicly on employees' economic and workplace issues. Indifference on the chief's part—or worse—a negative attitude toward employees will provoke a vote of no confidence.

Strategy Number Two: Be Worthy of Employees' Trust

An officer participating in a no-confidence vote stated recently: "The feeling is that the basic principles associated with honesty should start at the top. The chief should be held to the same standards that we (the officers) are in regards to honesty." Employees want to believe that the chief's words can be trusted, that he or she is above reproach, honest, and a person of integrity. The chief is the ultimate role model for the agency and needs to lead by example.

When employees talk about the chief, they talk about what they can and cannot get away with in the department. They talk about what the chief stands for, what he or she believes in, what the standards are by which the chief chooses to live his or her life and to lead the department—they talk about his or her *character*.

"It is character that communicates most eloquently," said Waldo Emerson. "What you are shouts so loudly in my ears I cannot hear what you say."

Today's police executive need to seize every opportunity to express his or her beliefs and to uphold organizational values, such as *integrity, fairness, respect, dignity, and compassion*, emphasizing—particularly in a labor-management relations setting—*what* is right as opposed to *who* is right. To do anything less could give cause for a vote of no confidence.

Strategy Number Three: Build Relationships Through Open Communication

To ensure smooth, harmonious labor-management relations, there must be constant communication and cooperation between the police executive and the union leader. The latter

should have easy access to the chief and should not have to go through the chain of command to see him or her. Through informal communications, periodic scheduled meetings, and/or the union president's participation in staff meetings, labor and management can often avoid or eliminate problems before they arise. At the very least, consistent efforts to maintain open communication can often diminish the disruptive impact of any labor-management problems that may surface.

The real challenge for police executives today, particularly in light of their officers' increased educational levels, is to identify innovative techniques for encouraging labor-management communication. New and varied tools for communication will facilitate development of employee commitment and early resolution or avoidance of labor-management problems. Some of the techniques now used effectively by police agencies for encouraging open communication include labor-management retreats and committees, advisory groups, department and union newsletters, open door systems, suggestion programs, surveys, etc.

One of the most viable, yet little used vehicles for open, upward communication is the employee association, or union itself. Police unions are attuned to the needs of the rank and file and the concerns of officers at the operational level. The chief should encourage officers' participation in and communication through the union. To avoid risking a vote of no confidence, and to assist in resolving organizational problems, it is essential for the chief to *listen to* and *encourage input* from these union members.

Strategy Number Four: Focus on Fairness

Unions are constantly accusing management of acting unfairly with regard to discipline, promotions, and assignments, claiming that officers' promotions are often based on ineffective and inaccurate performance evaluations and on perceptions or politics, rather than on merit and performance.

Admittedly, fairness is often in the eye of the beholder, but the chief wishing to avoid a vote of no confidence must focus on developing an organizational culture based on *trust* and *fairness*. Trust is the lubricant that keeps the organization's wheels turning, while fairness is the glue that holds it together.

The chief who is committed to maintaining a sense of fairness is one who:

- Avoids playing favorites;
- is more interested in giving credit to others than taking credit;
- treats employees with respect and dignity regardless of their positions;
- gives people the freedom they need to do the job;
- is open to hearing different opinions;
- treats others as they would wish to be treated;
- personally values individual and cultural diversity;
- gives people the support and encouragement they need; and
- gives consistently fair performance feedback.

Strategy Number Five: Develop A Political Power Base

Police executives must develop a political power base that they can call upon for support in the event of a no-confidence vote. Such a power base should consist of key community

leaders; for example, the mayor, the city manager, city council members, and other influential community members. Good working relationships based on open communication between the chief and these leaders will be invaluable in the event of a no-confidence vote. It must be remembered that such a vote is a political ploy; thus, the chief must do his or her political homework (build relationships with the primary political decision-makers) if he or she is to survive the test.

Strategy Number Six: Care About Your Employees

Police executives who are committed to reducing employee dissatisfaction and avoiding no-confidence votes must focus on making the workplace a “worth place”—where people care about people and where both organizational and employee needs are emphasized.

Chiefs need to take the community policing philosophy of customer service and apply it internally—to communicate to employees that they are important customers by treating them with courtesy, dignity, and respect. If these law enforcement leaders would focus on getting their own houses in order first and foremost—by treating their employees as customers—they could then expect the employees to treat the external customers in the same manner. When we do not treat our employees as customers, when we fail to give them administrative support, when we do not show that we care, a vote of no confidence—the ultimate dart—is inevitable.

As police chiefs of the year 2000 and beyond, we could all more easily avoid most of those dreaded darts—the votes of no confidence that are hovering out there in the twenty-first century—by constantly reminding ourselves that:

People don't care what you know. What they want to know is, do you care? If you show your people you care, they will follow you anywhere.

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CONCLUSION

There is no question that many problems with the union have nothing to do with the chief's performance or personality. Rather, the union activities are intended to try to exert pressure on politicians for wages, benefits, or a change in working conditions. There are a few union leaders who are only interested in the acquisition of power--both within the union and in the political arena. On the other hand, to be fair, some organizational problems can be traced directly to poor management practices. The following test may well give you an idea of how you are doing and whether or not you are the problem. Take the test—and be generous in your scoring. Give the test to your secretary and close associates and ask them to rate your management style. If you receive passing marks then, most likely, the problems with the union may not be of your making. Hence, little personal change is needed on your part. However, if the problem does lie with union leaders then it might be prudent to review and possibly revise your strategies in dealing with these people. Once you understand the union's strategy, then their strategy loses most of its effectiveness.

The bottom line is, "Do you want to avoid a vote of no confidence?" "How committed are you to resolving the labor-management conflict and to building an effective labor-management relationship?" "Are you willing to change your leadership style?" Take the test! Rate yourself, on a scale of 1-4, on each of the following items. Remember to give the test to some others you work with and have them rate you on the test questions provided. Now compare these results with your own. Normally, the scores will be close. If your score is high and the commanders are low, then you need to do an honest self-examination. If your general score is under 75 it may well indicate a problem you may wish to address. If your score is high, but you note a particular low score on any one of the questions you may want to take some corrective action. Anything above 90 would indicate that it is safe to take that long-needed vacation.

1	2	3	4
<i>not well</i>	<i>adequate</i>		<i>excellent</i>

1. Communicates in an open, genuine manner.
2. Conducts all transactions with the union in a professional, respectful manner.
3. Believes in the basic values of the department.
4. Willing to admit to own mistakes.
5. Works consistently to inspire pride in the police department.
6. Keeps elected officials abreast of controversial labor-management issues.
7. Avoids acting like a "big shot" or a "phony."
8. Shows a high degree of personal integrity in dealing with others.
9. Gives people the support and encouragement they need.
10. Exhibits genuine interest in employees.
11. Recognizes the union's right to exist and represent its members.
12. Avoids "playing favorites."
13. Strives to develop an atmosphere of trust and cooperation.
14. Encourages "bottom-up" communication.
15. Controls emotions during labor disputes.
16. Treats people with respect and dignity regardless of their position in the department.

17. Seeks ways to open avenues of communication with elected and appointed officials.
18. Shows care and concern for employees.
19. Develops a personal power base in the community.
20. Leads by example.
21. Speaks out publicly on behalf of employees regarding economic and other workplace concerns.
22. Agrees to disagree agreeably.
23. Focuses on problems—not personalities.
24. Resolves union concerns and criticisms internally without engaging the media.
25. Acts on personal beliefs as to what is “right” as opposed to what is “politically correct.”

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