Reno Police Department

Integrity - Service - Excellence

Police Training Officer (PTO) Program at the Reno Police Department

Presented at the Center for Problem Oriented Policing Conference

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Background

- Impetus for change
- PTO Program history
- Program components
- PTO history at the Reno Police Department
- PTO Evolution
- Organizational Survey and Benefits
- Closing comments
Impetus for Change

■ The Field Training Officer (FTO) Model was introduced in 1970
■ FTO is a task-based model
■ FTO lacks Community Oriented Policing and Problem Solving (COPPS) components
■ Challenges facing law enforcement are increasingly more adaptive, requiring critical thinking, networking and problem solving
■ The PTO Model provides a foundation for life-long learning
■ PTO principles encourage organizational learning
PTO Program History

- The Department of Justice awarded the Reno Police Department (RPD) $500,000.00 for research and development of a new training model.
- Research included interaction with 450 law enforcement executives in America and Canada.
- RPD was the Beta-site for PTO development and training.
- The following agencies participated as test sites:
  - Charlotte Mecklenburg (NC)
  - Savannah (GA)
  - Colorado Springs (CO)
  - Richmond (CA)
  - Lowell (MA)
Adult Learning Principles

- **Bloom’s taxonomy (1956):** Levels of learning and performance (Knowledge, application and evaluation)

- **Knowles’ (1981) principles of adult learning:** Adults must be partners in their own learning. Learning must be problem-based rather than just content-centered

- **Problem-based Learning (Barrows, 1980):** The learning process stimulates problem-solving, critical thinking, and teamwork

- **Emotional Intelligence (Goleman, 1995):** Developing self-awareness, self-regulation, empathy and social competence
Program Components

- **Four Substantive Topics:**
  - Non-Emergency Response
  - Emergency Response
  - Patrol Activities
  - Criminal Investigations

- **15 Core Competencies:**
  - Relate to specific skills, knowledge and abilities essential to good policing
  - Require learner to apply competencies to a variety of field situations

- **Learning Tools:**
  - Daily journaling
  - Weekly Coaching and Training Reports
  - Problem-Based Learning Exercises
  - Neighborhood Portfolio Exercise
  - Cohort work
PTO History at RPD

- Beta-site for PTO training and implementation
- RPD has trained approximately 200 RPD personnel since 2001
- PTO program has spread throughout Nevada and the Western United States. Impacting approximately 1000 law enforcement personnel in Nevada
- RPD continues evaluation and program development
- RPD develops first Regional Academy utilizing PTO and Adult Learning principles
PTO Evolution at RPD

- PTO program has evolved incorporating:
  - Improvements to adult learning and leadership principles
  - Addition on intelligence theories related to learning
  - Leadership as problem solving activity
  - Operational and legal components
  - Implementing an evaluating the program
  - Prescriptive training

- Developed and implemented:
  - Police Training Supervisor Program (PTS)
  - Detention Officer Program (DTO)
  - Civilian Manager Program (CMP)

- Implemented and required Adult Learning training for all trainers at the Reno Police Department
- Implemented learning principles into all in-service training programs
- Develop required leadership training for all personnel
Academy

- Transitioning from traditional law enforcement academy to adult-based learning environment
- PTO principles incorporated include:
  - Journaling
  - Coaching and Training Reports (CTR)
  - Problem Based Learning Exercises (PBLE)
  - Cohort work in problem solving
  - Teaching the importance and role of leadership
- Improved cross boundary communications and technical work between pre-employment, academy and PTO processes
Has the PTO program at the Reno Police department effectively produced officers who are capable of:

- Providing responsible, community-focused policing
- Employing critical thinking and problem solving, and
- Will utilizing the PTO training principles in all aspects of training improve the overall performance of the Reno Police Department
Methodology

- Voluntary Survey Instrument (16 questions)
  - 11 questions utilizing a Likert scale
  - 5 questions requiring written summaries (opinions and observations)
- Distributed to 100 RPD Personnel
  - Administrators, Supervisors and Police Officers
- Respondents included:
  - Gender: women (8.3%) and men (91.7%)
  - Administrators (14.6%)
  - Police supervisors (16.7%)
  - Police officers (68.8%)
  - 75% of the officers were trained in the FTO Model
  - 87% of the officers surveyed identified the PTO Model as the most effective training method
- Utilized Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) for accuracy
PTO Improved Policing Skills

- 51% Strongly Agree, 43% Some what agree, 3% neutral and 3% unknown

Comments:
- (+) PTO creates a learning environment for free thinking and taking responsibility
- (+) The inclusion of problem based learning has developed trainees that effectively identify crime and community problems
- (-) PTO has not been effective due to personnel shortages and increased calls for service
PTO Improved Problem Solving Skills

- 62% Strongly agree, 33% Some what agree, 2% neutral, 3% unknown

- Comments:
  - (+) PTO creates flexibility to allow for problem solving
  - (+) PTO is based on life long learning and adaptation
  - (+) PTO trainees identify and utilize a variety of non-law enforcement resources
  - (+) PTO trainees are better prepared for future policing challenges
  - (-) PTO not effective because of constraints on available time and personnel
PTO Principles Infused into All Training will Improve Organizational Performance

- 67% Strongly agree, 29% Some what agree, 2% neutral, 2% unknown
- Comments:
  - (+) PTO principles honor the learner
  - (+) PTO principles encourage interactive discussion, critical thinking and problem solving
  - (+) PTO principles provide a holistic approach to problems vs. menu driven approach
  - (-) PTO principles are often time consuming and personnel intensive
Benefits

- Improved critical thinking and problem solving skills (PBLE and NPE)
- Officers are more resourceful and effective at developing networks in the community
- Earlier interaction and assimilation in the organization (PTO and trainee roles)
- More successful in competing for special assignments (PTO trainees realize the needs of the organization)
- A focus on training and development over evaluation
- Leadership role and opportunity more prevalent (Involvement in organizational and community programs)
- Cornerstone for developing a learning organization
Policy Recommendations

- Develop PTO training systems for other RPD personnel groups
- Infuse PTO principles into other aspects of training at the RPD
- Infuse PTO principles into basic academy and citizens academy environments
- Develop a Center for Public Leadership
Areas for Further Research

- Whether or not PTO trained officers are more successful as a result of adult and problem-based learning
- Are PTO trained officers selected to special assignments or promoted earlier because of their demonstrated learning skills?
- What new skills, knowledge and abilities do PTO trained officers demonstrate that may lead to new criteria for recruiting and hiring new recruits?
- Does the PTO program promote the development of a learning organization? How?
Questions