

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



RPD PTO Survey (2007)

- **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
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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
