

Police Morale

Abstract

Police work or just the field of law enforcement in general is probably to single most thankless job there is. I'm just blown away at the idea that the people we are sworn to protect are so critical of us. They want us to provide a safe and secure environment only if, it's the way they want it. That reminds me of a scene from a great movie, "You rest under the very blanket of freedom I, provide and yet you questioned the way I provide it". What every happened to "Don't bite the hand that feeds you ". This paper will touch on all aspects of police morale from it's decline and the effects it had on the officers life and community. You will get different views from experts in the field and the opinion of a Detroit Police Officer. I will also give different ways to measure morale and show ways to possibly increase it also you will get to see a staff study that was conducted and included. So hopefully some will look at this problem that's plaguing our officers and do something about it, look at what happened to the postal employees, see what they had to go through before there morale issue was addressed.

INTRODUCTION

“You can’t buy your employees enthusiasm, loyalty, hearts, minds or souls. You must earn them! You can only expect to get back what you have put into it”.

According to Louis A Radelet Author of the “Police and the Community”, the police today are seemingly more in the public eye than in the past. Why so? It is not the police alone; we are cast in the lime light, the same seems to be the case with all sectors of public policy and service. Maybe we are scrutinized because of our extraordinary power. Yet that power has not been recently acquired, so we must probe the question further. Once we really take a look at this picture you can see how we are portrayed in the media and the every day stress we are faced with. These are the things that aid in the decaying of the fibers that hold our morale high and that is the focus of this research.

I, picked this subject because of an incident that happened, that I was directly involved in with other Officers (Rhodes, Sims, and Dean). It was the summer of “97” we were assigned to the Harbor master unit on Belle Isle. We received a general broad cast. “Child in water” before any one could key their “mics”. I pulled up along with the above named heroes. We quickly assessed the situation and determined that the child was still in the water and due to the tide she was not far from the shore. There was no help from the family and the father who was supposed to have been watching the children playing was drunk and passed out underneath a near by tree. There was no other choice but to go in to the water. We were all on the same page, we immediately came out of our uniforms; Yes even our “hats”, and dove in. The way we acted you would’ve sworn we were apart of the dive team. One after another we dove down as far as

we could go to see if we could feel anything. This went on for about fifteen minutes all of a sudden Officer Rhodes shouted “I feel something!” Once again we took a breath and dove in the area Officer Rhodes was. The treasure was found. It was a beautiful, six-year-old little girl. We rushed her Ashore to awaiting paramedics. Officer Dean quickly gave her two breaths for an attempt of rescue breathing. Once paramedics had her they began to work on her shortly after that we heard “I got a pulse!” We were all slumped over together gagging on the water we ingested. Once we heard they got a pulse we all stood up and began to smile. The crowd began to cheer shouting “This time D.P.D. was on it” It made us feel good , but unknown to us the feeling was temporary . Our supervisor received a phone call and told us in one breath she didn’t make it. She died as the ambulance was turning into the hospital. We were heroes for 18 minutes and 38 seconds. We tried, but could not help! Breaking down, each officer had his or her own point of reference to compare the little girl to. Once again we heard a voice it said, “I’m sorry “fellas” but now back to work. Get out of those wet uniforms and put on new ones. Clear your heads because the strand needs sweeping.” We were hurt, of course, that the little girl didn’t make it. Maybe the sting would not be as bad if the department would have recognized our effort, but still to this day it has not. That was five years ago she would have been 11 years old . Multiply this by 4,000 officers and you can see how the fibers that hold our morale up are rotted away.

With this paper I will attempt to show how and when morale declined in the Detroit Police Department, I will also attempt to show how it can be increased through inexpensive means, through research and survey’s. I will also conduct a comparison between different Departments, with equal or greater size that has had morale problems and that have corrected

Need for change

There is a definite need for change in the mindset of the effected Officers. Low morale and low feeling of self worth are deadly combinations. As shown above low morale can effect an Officers work production. For example we've all heard Officers "say if they don't pay me right I'm not going to give one hundred percent", that kind of attitude can lead to other problems, such as Officers safety, and avoidable citizen complainants. By implementing different programs, it could help ease tension between management and the effected Officers. Option number one, open the door for different money making opportunities i.e. (outside employment) also more recognition for jobs well done. Also entrust the Officer's to make decision when dealing with citizens. This is truly a problem that has to be dealt with before it's to late.

History

From the information I have gathered through surveys, I was able to determine that this has been going on for some time now. Even newer officers are skeptical about the job they are sworn to uphold. We are asking them to risk their lives for lower pay than our suburban counter parts; the entry pay is a joke. They feel they do more work for half the pay. You ask them why? Because there is more prestige being a Detroit Police Officer you are considered the "real police".

Stakeholders

Our stakeholders are our citizens they are paying for services and the only thing they are getting are disgruntled, over worked, and underpaid, under trained, and undermanned service providers. The law enforcement community across the country, hopefully we can implement a

plan that would help a department in the future, that's in our present state now. The family of law enforcement members are valuable stakeholders also the effects of low moral can determine if you intentionally or unintentionally separate your self from your love ones.

Barriers

The only barriers are the one's that we set. If it's a total commit on both sides all project's can work but like any thing you are going to have people that are not team players and you can't please everyone.

Decision

I believe all of the options could be implemented. For so long we have been asked to make the ultimate sacrifice putting our lives on the line for pennies serving a community that needs us but the way we are portrayed in the media the citizens feel they are better off without us, there fore no money. We need to change that way of thinking there's no way around it. With these changes, the Stakeholders will be pleased with the service there getting, and the members will feel better about providing those services. A pleased employee will make a pleasing product.

LITERATURE REVIEW

James Q Wilson author of Police Morale and The Role Dilemma undertook to deal with this puzzle in one of his earliest treaties on police work. He recognized the there in no single explanation for Police morale problems. For the individual police officer in the big city the main concern, Wilson asserted, is finding some consistent, satisfying basis for his self conception: to be able to live with himself in reasonable tranquility. The gravity of this concern of course,

varies with individual officers and departments. Wilson contends that the problem of morale results from two aspects of the police officers' role.

First they often deal with their clients as adversaries. Second they are frequently under pressure to service incompatible ends. We have all ready noted the latter point in relations to the functions of law enforcements and order maintenance: the public can not make up its mind what it wants from the police to alleviate the police morale problem, therefore, some consensus must be reached as to what is expected of the police, community by community.

It is basically the role question again. Police and community must move together toward clearer directional signals than presently exist as to the police exercise of discretion. This is in effect, a matter of political process in a democracy involving coalitions, compromise, and consensus. On the police side, the reality of the heterogeneity of the community must be recognized another way of saying that the police must become the police of all the people. In agreement with Wilson I feel that if one's proud of one's occupation and to view it as a profession and to enjoy good and positive standings in the community should lead to attitudes toward the work done by members of the profession. In essence self-image is everything. If you don't think you are a star you won't shine.

PROCEDURES

Morale (or esprit-de-corps principle) is one of the oldest ideas in administrative science, going back to the management practices of ancient civilizations, like Greeks, Romans, Egyptians and Venetians. Yet, "morale" is a difficult word to define. Let's take a look at the definitional/theoretical problem.

DEFINING MORALE

It's easier to describe it as a "state of mind, a mood, a mental condition" (Bennet & Hess 1998), when these things are all positive and upbeat. It's the idea that work is not really work, it's enjoyable, a source of pride. But, this is perhaps too mentalistic of a definition. A more theoretical definition would be "positive affective orientation towards membership" (Price 1972), which is the equivalent of the sociological concept of 'group cohesion'. In this sense, morale is the behavior of employees wanting to belong to the organization. But, there are many other reasons for this kind of behavior in the behavior definition. The morale problem or what is commonly defined as the "morale problem" of the police is as variously defined, as is police professionalism, with a tendency to settle for rather superficial explanations; for example, that the police morale problem is largely a matter of money. Accordingly, improved police salaries and pensions benefits are seen as the answer. There are certainly no oppositions here to improvement of the financial security of police officers, but the problem is not that simple.

Morale pertains to the attitude, mental and emotional, that an individual has about the task he or she is expected to perform. What is called good morale is a state of well-being that stems from a sense of purpose and confidence in the future. It depends on role conception, role performance, and role satisfaction. Morale is intimately related to self-respect, which in turn, contributes to a positive self-image.

Simply defining morale in these terms provides a clue to the particular problem of the police officer. If morale is related to role, and if police work is a classic example of role conflict and role ambiguity, it follows that police officers must have a special kind of self-image problem.

How does a person learn who he is? Psychologists tell us that an individual discovers a large part of the answer to this question in the feedback he gets from others. To illustrate this point, we may say that people harbor certain attitudes regarding what a person does- his job or calling. This is what is meant by ascribed status. Some jobs have high status, other low status, depending upon such attitudes. The status of a person's job or occupation is an important factor in the satisfaction he gets from it, but it is, of course, not the only factor.

What a person does for a living is one basis of feedback for his self-image for learning who he is and how he rates in the status hierarchy of a given society. The feedback process means simply that each of us governs his actions according to the estimate he believes others are making of him. This may be tabbed to social self. An individual discovers who he is by seeing himself in the actions of others towards him. A University of Michigan social psychologist, Charles Cooley, long ago tabbed this process "the looking-glass self."

We have said that occupation is one source of personal identity. Possession, where we live, what we do for recreation, and what we wear are others. However, we tend to screen or filter the information that comes to us in the feedback process, to be selective in what we perceive and accept about ourselves. We tend to see and accept what is pleasant about ourselves and provides a positive image, to reject what is negative, and often to project on others what we cannot accept in ourselves. Some psychologists say that the closer our self-image is to the image that most people hold of us, the nearer we are to good mental health. Achieving this realistic appraisal of ourselves is the process and goal of personality maturation

RESULTS

It's easier to define morale by what it is NOT. It's not the same as effort, efficiency, or productivity. In fact, there is often dialectic between morale and productivity. The two are not necessarily causally related (March & Simon 1958; Perrow 1986), although commonsense would seem to indicate that as one goes up, the other goes up. For example, we often hear that low morale in a police agency is causing a low level of productivity, but that is simply not true (Stojkovic, Kalinich & Klofas 1998). What is true is that there are basic organizational problems creating both low productivity and low morale. To basic problems that have this effect are: (1) employee lack of certainty about their jobs; and (2) failure of employees to buy into the mission statement and goals; but there are many possible problem factors other than these two.

It's NOT a motivational problem. Motivation is just the willingness of employees to work, and you've bought that from them. You can't increase morale by turning your supervisor to better motivators, make no matter what the consultants tell you. Parsons (1951) the great functionalist thinker was one of the first to point out that morale is a collective, systematic phenomenon. It must arise *sui generis* (seeming out of nothing). You can't motivate morale and you probably shouldn't measure it by employee turn over, although this is a common trap.

It's NOT the same as job satisfaction, but morale is the collective counter part of job satisfaction. An individual needs and preferences determined job satisfaction. You can't simply add up or aggregate all the individual job satisfaction scores of each employee and call that average figure "morale". You need to eliminate or control for individual differences. Yet, as we shall see, morale is often inferred from job satisfaction surveys, but you need to make the

important distinction between individual and organizational morale. The results of your surveys may lead you to believe that organizational morale is high, when in fact; it's only individual morale that's high.

DISCUSSION

There are essentially three ways to measure morale:

(1) The Job Satisfaction Survey (averaging up individual responses from strongly disagree to strongly agree.) Over the years, there have been a bewildering variety of job satisfaction surveys created, but most analysis of such items have revealed the following core dimensions or salient factors:

- This is a good place to work
- My supervisor understands me
- My supervisor listens to my concerns
- I have the training I need to do a good job
- I am proud to be a member of this organization

Surveys are used in two ways: (a) as a means of appeasement, where management is trying to make it look like they care about employee morale; and (b) as a way to follow through with some action, and the most important actions that can be taken are salary equity studies, benefits recalculation, and changing innovation.

(2) The Great American Buy-In (getting the employees to buy into the mission statement).

I'm not sure who invented the phrase "buy-in" (maybe Dilbert), but it seems to be going

on everywhere these days in organizations. You already know that mission statements should contain no more than 5 values (work like “Trustworthy”, Honesty” “Value”, “Quality”, etc.), and that mission statement serve as a useful tool in deflecting outside criticism, cultivating constituencies, building coalitions, etc.

- (3) The basic idea of a buy-in is that you allow some work time for employees to personally think about, reflect upon, get together with others if they want to, and write down all the various ways they “implement” the values in the mission statement in their daily work lives. The danger of this approach is that it seems to force morale to happen, but if done in such a way that there are no associated task demands, I guess it could work, but the method has been largely untested.

The success of buy-ins may be largely a determined of the degree of professionalism. The higher the prestige of the occupation, and the greater the concentration of specialist, the higher the level of collective morale. As bridging the micro-macro gap (Hage, 1980). This normally means there must be job autonomy, skilled workers, and as few repetitive tasks as possible. The channels of communication and surveillance may also be important in the success of buy-ins. Mechanisms that create the impression of being watched (surveillance on employees) will lower collective morale (Blau & Scott 1962). It is important to decrease visibility of task supervision, but at the same time, increase the level of communication. One of specific problems that impede employee buy-in is the fear that management is monitoring the way the Police, Police.

RECOMMENDATIONS

A general rule of thumb, assuming you are able to make the distinction is that whenever you have low levels of individual morale, you should try intrinsic rewards such as employee self-evaluation of proficiency training programs. If you have low levels of collective morale, you should try extrinsic methods of reward such as pay equity, new equipment, more benefits.

These, of course, are oversimplified shortcuts, but it appears that managers will not stop thinking you can motivate morale, so you might as well have rules of thumb. Here's a more specific list of things management can do to build morale:

MORLE BUILDING EXERCISES

Be positive & upbeat (accentuate the positive). Turn "Don't statements into "Do" statements

Set meaningful goals (with "meaningful" meaning with employee input)

Set fair goals (with "fair" meaning at a level where almost everybody succeeds)

Be even-headed in praise and criticism (strive for a even 50-50 split even if you have to force it)

Make no promises that can't be kept (avoid use of the phrase "I might be able to do that for you")

Improve appearances (in dress, logo. Redesign, insignia, signs, banners, colors)

Create awards programs (competitions, recognitions and certificates of appreciation)

Establish teams (best in budget crunches, and tend to produce employee giveaways via groupthink)

Start using nickname (or first names; give everyone a nickname based on some talent they have)

Learn the art of bulletin board decoration (a combination of aesthetic appeal and functionality)

CRIMINAL JUSTICE MORALE BUILDING PROJECTS

- (1) The SUGGESTION BOX. One of the oldest methods with some empirical support, Collective morale is increased when workers are consulted in advance and allowed to make suggestions, even it anonymously (Coch & French 1948)
- (2) The EMPLOYESS INTERVIEW. These are 20- minute ventilation session where the employees, one-by-one, get to spill out all their thoughts and feelings to a manager, uninterrupted and unrecorded. However, there is usually a final report summarizing management's perception of the organization's collective morale. (Hamilton, NJ PD)
- (3) The EMPLOYEE COUNCIL. These are teams put together by elected, rotated-every-quarter, and representatives from each division of the organization. (West Bend, WISO)
Usually, the teams focus on 1-2 specific problems during the 3-month period, and produce a report with the following sections
 - Introduction
 - Problem statement
 - Alternative solutions
 - Cost analysis
 - Method of implementations
 - Summary
- (4) EMPLOYEE INCENTIVE PROGRAMS. There are a variety of these, and a partial list would include:

- Fast promotion track (leapfrogging)- a good FTO report leads to early sergeant exam eligibility
- Extra bonus vacation of sick days
- Tuition reimbursements
- Stock options/pension contribution

Note: it is probably important to do a benefits survey to have employees rank which benefits are most important.

(5) The MASTER PATROL OFFICER (MPO) Program. This is a program for boosting the morale of veteran officers (Thrash 1992). It is basically a point system for various accomplishments throughout the police career that lead to a special status, insignia, of designation within rank. (Pierce Co. SO, Tacoma WA) With these shared ideas I do believe we will be on our way!

INTERNET REOSURCES:

[When You Have Employee Morale](#)
[How to Turn Negative Workers into Positive Performers](#)
[How to Create Flexible Reward Systems](#)
[How to Run an Incentive Program](#)

[The Meaningful Workplace website](#)

[Brightly Colored uniforms Boost Morale \(parody site\)](#)

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POLICE MORALE CAUSE AND EFFECTS

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An applied research project submitted to the Department of Interdisciplinary Technology as part
of the School police Staff and Command Program

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