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# BASIC HANDBOOK *of* POLICE SUPERVISION

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A Practical Guide for Law Enforcement Supervisors

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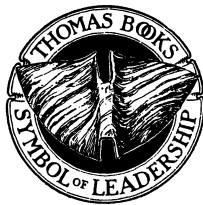
# **BASIC HANDBOOK OF POLICE SUPERVISION**

**A Practical Guide for Law Enforcement Supervisors**

*By*

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**CHARLES C THOMAS • PUBLISHER, LTD.**  
*Springfield • Illinois • U.S.A.*

*Published and Distributed Throughout the World by*

CHARLES C THOMAS • PUBLISHER, LTD.

2600 South First Street

Springfield, Illinois 62704

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ISBN 978-0-398-08760-9 (paper)

ISBN 978-0-398-08782-1 (ebook)

Library of Congress Catalog Card Number: 2013041365

*With THOMAS BOOKS careful attention is given to all details of manufacturing  
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*Printed in the United States of America  
SM-R-3*

#### **Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data**

Garner, Gerald W.

Basic handbook of police supervision : a practical guide for law enforcement  
supervisors / by Gerald W. Garner, Chief of Police, Greeley Police Depart-  
ment, Greeley, Colorado.

pages cm

Includes index.

ISBN 978-0-398-08760-9 (pbk.) -- ISBN 978-0-398-08782-1 (ebook)

1. Police--Supervision of--Handbooks, manuals, etc. 2. Police administration--  
Handbooks, manuals, etc. 3. Law enforcement--Handbooks, manuals, etc. I.  
Title.

HV7936.S8G358 2014

363.2'2--dc23

2013041365

*To Kathy*



## PREFACE

At one time or another in his or her career, every law enforcement supervisor has wished for a handbook providing reliable guidance on what to do next. For most supervisors, that moment of wishful thinking comes many times over a leadership career.

This is that handbook. Written by a veteran law enforcement leader and compiled from the experiences, both good and bad, of a lot of law enforcement supervisors, it offers practical, no-frills advice about what to do to counter the day-to-day challenges and outright calamities that make up the first-line leader's work life. Perhaps even more important, it offers time-proven recommendations on how to prevent a bothersome situation from escalating into crisis proportions in the first place.

The handbook will prove equally useful to the veteran, novice, or future law enforcement supervisor. Its sound advice will help him retain his emotional as well as physical and moral health in a real-world environment that seems to become more challenging every day. It will help him to lead and bring his people to share his practices and beliefs in doing a very critical job the *right* way.

Just as it should be, the handbook is short on theory and long on "how to" advice. It is literally a resource that the supervisor can tuck into an equipment bag, or otherwise keep close at hand. It will help him grasp his difficult job's various demands, balance competing interests and excel as a leader, all the while serving as an exceptional role model for his employees. It likewise will aid him in carrying out the very practical tasks of communicating effectively, evaluating employee performance, correcting inappropriate behavior and helping his officers survive both on the street and in the police organization. Meanwhile, the handbook will assist the law enforcement leader in working well with his own boss and planning his own career.



There is no job description in the world quite like that of first-line law enforcement boss. The job is as unique as it is difficult and vital to the success of any successful police organization. Fortunately, the position is generally staffed by extremely competent people with organizational as well as physical courage. This book will help them become even better at their very important job.

G.W.G.

## INTRODUCTION

**T**he law enforcement supervisor faced with the challenges of the street is really not looking for philosophical discussions of the finer points of leadership and personnel management theory. Rather, he most often needs practical advice for solving the real-life problems he faces on the job each day. That is precisely the kind of “how to” advice this handbook provides.

The handbook combines the lessons of the author’s 43-year law enforcement career with the actual experiences of a lot of first-line police leaders. Some of these lessons have been learned the hard way. The purpose of the book is to impart the knowledge without sharing the pain another law enforcement leader may have experienced in the process of gaining the information. Most of the challenges faced by today’s law enforcement supervisors have been confronted (and solved) before. The actors and the stage may have changed; the script is often the same.

Chapter 1 will help the supervisor understand his new role now that he’s not “one of the guys” anymore. Chapter 2 examines the leader’s many obligations while the book’s third chapter seeks to help the supervisor balance his host of new tasks.

Being a positive role model is one of the first-line leader’s most important jobs, and Chapter 4 will help him in his quest to serve as an exceptional model for his employees to emulate. Chapter 5 will help him fill his leadership toolbox while Chapter 6 provides time-proven guidelines for communicating effectively – an absolute must if he is to excel as a leader. Meanwhile, Chapter 7 will help the supervisor master one of his toughest tasks: measuring the performance of his subordinates.

Chapter 8 will aid the supervisor in receiving and investigating complaints of employee misconduct. Chapter 9 provides practical advice in administering corrective action to his personnel. The chapter will not

teach him to enjoy handing out discipline. Instead, it will help him fix broken behavior and save careers. Chapter 10 provides him with the basics for keeping those same employees safe in the face of the many dangers of the law enforcement officer's job.

On occasion, the front-line supervisor will find himself confronted on-scene by the ladies and gentlemen of the news media. Chapter 11 tells him how to feed the newshounds without getting bitten. In Chapter 12, the police boss will learn the organizational survival tricks of the trade for surviving his own boss, while Chapter 13 will help guide him safely through the minefields of his own organization with its always present politics and pitfalls.

Chapter 14 will guide the law enforcement supervisor in gathering all he has learned about leadership into building a successful career for himself. The book's next and final chapter offers practical advice for the leader deciding where to take his next career step.

This basic handbook is indeed a practical guide for today's law enforcement supervisor. Coupling that knowledge with his own good judgment and common sense, he should be well-prepared for whatever challenges the future might bring.

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# **BASIC HANDBOOK OF POLICE SUPERVISION**





## Chapter 1

### HOW TO MASTER YOUR ROLE

**Y**ou gained a lot when you became a supervisor. You certainly gained a lot of additional responsibilities. You gained additional respect and prestige, too. You doubtlessly began receiving a bit fatter paycheck and may have picked up some additional perks, as well. Hopefully, your gains were substantial once you sewed on those brand new stripes.

But you gave up some things when you became a supervisor, too. For one thing, you gave up the questionable privilege of griping about anything and everything concerning your organization and its leaders in front of whatever audience you might choose, whether inside or outside the department. You surrendered the option of damning the chief, the captain and your own immediate supervisor in front of your former colleagues who are now your subordinates. You gave up the ability to yammer about problems without proffering a realistic solution. (“Shoot the whole bunch” is not a realistic solution.)

You gave up a lot, alright. But you did not give up anything that an ethical and competent leader requires to do his job, and do it well. In this case, the major change that has occurred in your work life will be a good thing. Your bosses certainly thought you were capable of mastering change, or they would not have chosen you for the role of supervisor in the first place.

Change for the better is still change, however, and change frequently does not occur without emotional fallout. Even good change can bring psychological upset. That’s the topic to be explored next.

## **YOU'RE NOT ONE OF THE GUYS ANYMORE**

You may have noticed it even before you affixed those new chevrons to your uniform shirt. While they were still friendly enough, your old pals just didn't treat you exactly the same as they did before. They may not have seemed quite as chummy, quite as unguarded in what they said in front of you. Your shift from buddy to boss had begun. You likely felt the change, however minor. To many of your friends, you were now one of *them*: the brass.

If it is any comfort to you, the "change" occurs in every kind of work, from the oil field to the battle field to the board room. Former peers are at least a little uneasy hanging and interacting with old acquaintances who are now their bosses. How great or how minor the discomfort for everyone involved depends upon a lot of things, ranging from the nature of the former relationship to the personalities of the individuals themselves. Whatever the case, the discomfort is often very real.

You almost certainly thought about the reality that former relationships would change before you ever decided to go for promotion. You already determined that you could handle the potential downsides in exchange for the benefits that your new role would bring. If not, you must face that truth now. Fortunately, if you are anything like the vast majority of your law enforcement peers who made the jump successfully you will determine that the favorable consequences of promotion greatly outnumber the bad.

Even more good news for you is that you do not have to stop associating with your old work pals. You can still have a beer with them or take in the big game. You simply have to handle yourself just a little differently in their presence. You might say that you have a new outlook.

## **A NEW OUTLOOK**

Now that you are the boss, you are expected to see a few things differently than you did as a first-line officer. For one thing, you are expected to take in the bigger picture of your organization that extends well beyond yourself, your assignment, your unit. As a patrol officer you had to concentrate on doing your own job well. What was going on in other parts of the agency may not have concerned you a great

deal, so long as those doings were not obviously impacting you directly. You may not have much cared if the detectives were getting their fair share of resources or not so long as you were getting yours. Your own requirements were, after all, priority number one.

As a supervisor, you have to see the need for sharing resources agency-wide. Furthermore, you have to support filling that need through both words and action. On occasion that may mean offering personnel or other resources to another part of the department when you dearly would like to have them for yourself. That's called seeing the bigger picture that exists beyond your own slice of the larger pie that is a law enforcement organization. It is part of your new outlook on your work life.

Your revised outlook also has changed the way you look at some of those around you. Your line-level friends are now also your subordinates. In all likelihood, some of them are the people you must train, counsel, evaluate and lead. They are people you must, in a word, supervise.

At the same time, your superiors are no longer distant authority figures whom you can easily avoid. Now, some of them are your immediate bosses to whom you must turn for direction and advice. You are obligated to follow their orders. Indeed, things have changed in your world.

Your outlook likewise has been altered drastically in what you can ethically say to others about your peers and your supervisors. You undermine and weaken your fellow supervisors if you speak badly of them in front of your subordinates. You cause them equally serious damage if you permit your employees to say bad things about them in your presence. It matters not if you agree with what your troops are saying. Permitting attacks on your colleagues in your presence is intensely disloyal and destructive to the organization in which you have been promoted to the position of leader.

This same prohibition on public criticism (or the tolerance of it) holds true when the individuals under attack occupy the upper echelons of your department. Once more, only bad things (including decreased respect for you from your subordinates) can result from the tolerance of such misbehavior. Your ethics as a leader do not permit such a morally lazy response. You are too good, too much of a leader for that.