# ENDURING, SURVIVING, AND THRIVING AS A LAW ENFORCEMENT EXECUTIVE

The Illinois Law Enforcement
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# ENDURING, SURVIVING, AND THRIVING AS A LAW ENFORCEMENT EXECUTIVE

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# FOREWORD

LAW ENFORCEMENT AGENCIES NATIONWIDE are facing increased public and political scrutiny as they operate in a milieu of complex cultural, organizational and societal change. Never before has the citizenry and its institutions, e.g., government, media, community groups, legal systems, demanded so much of law enforcement officials, while concurrently critiquing their actions. Police organizations are under review.

Police agencies must strike a balance between retaining and refining organizational elements that have proven operationally effective, and taking the risks necessary for continuous innovation, renewal and organizational rebirth. Stated in other terms, police agencies must remain traditional, when traditional methods have proven effective, but must be willing to abandon traditionalism when the old way of doing things is no longer effective. As Margaret Meade once stated, "The world in which we are born is not the world in which we will live, nor is it the world in which we will die. " Police managers of today and of tomorrow face an interesting dilemma. What do we keep; what do we throw away; what has worked; what has proven ineffectual and what do we modify? Do we change for sake of change by following every new and emerging professional fad, or do we cautiously resist and risk being labeled as out of touch and out of date?

It is the leadership of law enforcement agencies which has the most significant and immediate effect upon the delivery of constitutional, civil, enlightened, and effective law enforcement. Simply stated, if we strive for effective police organizations and service delivery, we must first develop effective police administrators. This book is designed to assist current and future police executives in sorting through important leadership and management issues.

The genesis of this book was a law enforcement executive retreat conducted in the state of Illinois. The Law Enforcement Training and Standards Board was interested in identifying skills, abilities, knowledge, and personal attributes important to surviving as a law enforce-

ment executive. Contemporary literature abounds with documentation on the limited tenure of police executives. However, Board staff knew of several chiefs and sheriffs who had served the same community consecutively for 20 or more years. This awareness led to the following line of inquiry, "What factors had contributed to their survival?" Do these chiefs and sheriffs hold knowledge and professional secrets that could be shared with others preparing for leadership positions? And importantly, is it possible to survive as a police chief or sheriff without also being viewed as effective?

Invitations to the executive retreat were sent to 20 law enforcement executives, who were deemed to be well respected throughout the state by their peers and by their respective communities, and who had served as police executives for 20 or more years. The executive retreat was conducted in a resort atmosphere, was scheduled to last two days, and had no formalized agenda or scheduled guest speakers. The objective of the retreat was to ask one question of the participant chief executives, "What has made you successful as a law enforcement executive?" In popular vernacular, these law enforcement executives had been there, done that. Our question was, How did you do that?

What started out with looks of doubt from the invited participants and the unstated question of, "What! You called me here for this?" slowly developed into reflection and to a realization of the importance of the question.

It was obvious that many of these old hands had not really given serious consideration to the myriad factors contributing to their extended successes. They had learned and adapted throughout their careers; they had made mistakes and overcome obstacles; they made positive incremental adjustments; and, they had endured, survived, and thrived.

In this experiment the Law Enforcement Training and Standards Board had a selfish, yet laudable, interest in answering the question of "What made you successful as a law enforcement executive?" If the Board is to effectively train new law enforcement leaders, a body of knowledge concerning the state of the practice must be identified. Philosophy and theory combined with day-to-day application and practice was the body of knowledge we sought to identify. Our hypothesis was that 20 years of experience multiplied by 20 participants would yield 400 years of applied application and practice as law enforcement executives.

What began as a two-day executive retreat, focused on one question, developed into a series of three more executive retreats, the development of a week-long course curriculum for newly–appointed law enforcement administrators (see the appendix) and the publishing of this book.

Many of the original contributors to this work currently serve as instructors in the law enforcement administrators course–law enforcement executives with considerable experience, teaching our law enforcement leaders of tomorrow. As experienced law enforcement leaders, they feel an important obligation to give back to the profession and to assist in the development of future law enforcement leaders.

The insights, perspectives, suggestions, warnings, concepts and ideas contained within this book codify years of wisdom and experience related to law enforcement leadership and management. Returning to our earlier proposition, what do we keep, what do we throw away, and what do we modify?–that is the challenge to law enforcement leaders of tomorrow. But, it was also the challenge of law enforcement leaders who began their careers 20 years ago. It is the wise person indeed who learns from the lesson of the past in order to prepare for the future; who holds a healthy appreciation for tradition, but is open to challenge, exploration, inquiry, and change.

Thomas J. Jurkanin, Ph.D.

# PREFACE

A PERENNIAL CONCERN VOICED BY POLICE CHIEFS AND SHERIFFS from large and small departments is: you can do it correctly, you can be professional and still lose your job. The recent dismissals of chiefs over political differences with mayors or city councils are indicative of the job tenure problems faced by many law enforcement executives. Today, police chiefs are less secure in their positions than ever before. A scandal is no longer a necessary requisite to dismissal. The days of the police chiefs position as one of the most secure in local government have given way to a decade in which the position may be one of the least secure (Mahtesian, 1997).

Currently, the Police Executive Research Forum estimates that the average large city police chief will last anywhere from two-and-a-half to four years on the job. However, as Charles Mahtesian noted in a recent article in *Governing* magazine: "The sacking of the police chief has become part of the routine of the 1990s" (p.19). The issue of long-term survival has become the hot topic among law enforcement executives. Organizations such as the Police Executive Research Forum have initiated studies that attempt to measure and track the length of tenure among executives in the profession.

There is considerable debate as to why the rate of turnover among chiefs is increasing. As with any job, there are circumstances the officeholder can control or at least influence, while other environmental factors are beyond the control of the individual. Factors likely contributing to increased turnover include: (1) increases in the number of competing constituencies chiefs must appease, (2) new demands and expectations of police departments and police chiefs, and (3) the perception that all government (including police programs) are part of the problem, not the solution, in our society. One cannot measure the impact of any one of these factors on local law enforcement executive turnover. However, it is reasonable to suggest that they collectively have influenced police executive tenure.

These and many other social, political and organizational forces can impact upon the failure or success of a law enforcement executive's career. The purpose of this book is to provide a guide to future and present police chiefs, sheriffs and other law enforcement executives on how to survive and ultimately thrive in a job that is becoming increasingly difficult to handle.

The content taps the collective wisdom of a group of Illinois police chiefs, sheriffs and law enforcement executives with significant tenure in their roles. The contributing law enforcement officials represent large and small departments; urban, suburban and rural areas; and middle, lower and upper income communities. The information, ideas, and suggestions throughout the book were developed in a series of executive forums during which successful law enforcement executives discussed the factors that positively and negatively impacted on their careers. As a guide, this book reflects the perspectives of individuals who have successfully weathered the challenges of law enforcement leadership. While it is not possible to provide advice or a guide that anticipates all circumstances or is universally applicable, this volume provides reference points instructive to professionals facing the demands of law enforcement leadership.

The observations of the participants in the executive forums were compiled in draft documents. The coordinating authors, Larry Hoover, Jerry Dowling, and Janice Ahmad, organized these into chapters; added material from their personal experiences in working with police executives from throughout the country; and integrated published references.

This book examines the question of law enforcement executive survival from three perspectives: demands upon the individual, demands from within the police department, and external/environmental pressures. The information presented provides guidance from the collective experience of the contributors. Through experiences and learning moments as police chiefs, the contributors want to pass on their insight regarding the responsibilities and challenges police chiefs face. On the way up the career ladder most chiefs attend a number of good programs such as the FBI Academy, Law Enforcement Executive Development School (LEEDS), Northwestern Traffic Institute Staff and Command and Police Supervisors School, and the Southern Police Institute. Coupled with formal education, these programs provide a sound backdrop for executing responsibilities. However, the

actual application of skills and knowledge is where more learning takes place.

While the contributors cannot provide all the answers to being an effective police chief, an attempt is made to help the reader with her/his new responsibilities. The reader may use this collaborative compilation of information as a guide to prepare for the challenge of being a police chief.

Larry T. Hoover

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

FIRST AND FOREMOST, the Illinois Law Enforcement Training and Standards Board would like to thank each law enforcement executive identified herein who graciously shared their time, experiences and knowledge. Their collective wisdom is documented within this book. Since the nucleus of the book is the contribution of Illinois law enforcement, royalties from its sale are being donated to the Law Enforcement Foundation of Illinois, a non–profit organization supporting activities such as Police and Children Together (PACT) camps.

A special thanks goes to Dr. Lewis Bender for his work in artfully facilitating the executive retreat and to Dr. Robert Fischer and the Illinois Law Enforcement Executive Institute for their contributions.

Finally, to Dr. Larry Hoover, Dr. Jerry Dowling, and Janice Ahmad, who served as coordinating authors for this book, we convey our appreciation for their energy, talent and commitment.

Thomas J. Jurkanin, Ph.D.

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# ENDURING, SURVIVING, AND THRIVING AS A LAW ENFORCEMENT EXECUTIVE

# Chapter 1

# THE POLICE EXECUTIVE'S ROLE

POLICE AGENCIES ARE UNDOUBTEDLY THE MOST VISIBLE ELEMENT of local government. The media scrutiny is intense and relentless. The very nature of the police role subjects police chiefs and sheriffs to ongoing Monday morning quarterbacking. In a democratic society the police are not trusted, and never will be trusted. Their actions are always subject to scrutiny, and motives are questioned. Given this environment, it is essential that police chiefs and sheriffs grasp the complexity of their role. For example, they are told to acquire the broadest possible input when making administrative decisions. But, a balance must be struck between breadth of input and rapidity of response. Issues arise suddenly in policing, and the public expects a near instantaneous administrative response. Homilies extolling police managers to look before you leap are offset by those such as he who hesitates is lost. Agency management is a constant balancing act between expediency and careful planning.

### *Mintzberg's Managerial Roles*

Henry Mintzberg is one of the most popular writers on issues of organizational structure and management today. Mintzberg is not a purveyor of a fad approach characterized by a set of buzz words and clever diagrams. Unlike many of his counterparts, Mintzberg writes about management from an inductive rather than deductive approach.

That is, Mintzberg observes what managers are actually doing with their time and the processes they employ to make decisions, and accurately describes it. Mintzberg takes the perspective that what successful managers do is correct management, not what deductively we might suppose they ought to do.

Employing that perspective, Mintzberg (1989) stipulates three broad managerial roles:

- Interpersonal–figurehead, leader, liaison;
- Informational–monitor, disseminator, spokesperson;
- Decisional–entrepreneur, disturbance handler, resource allocator, negotiator.

The roles are distinguishable, but not necessarily mutually exclusive. While serving as the agency figurehead by making welcoming remarks to a conference, the manager may concurrently be engaging in liaison with persons from related organizations, serving as her/his organizational spokesperson, and disseminating information about the organization. The fact that a manager's role is not easily divided into distinct categories suggests that it is likewise not easily scientifically analyzed. Management is as much an art as a science, according to Mintzberg.

The lack of science in management is nevertheless not well recognized. Organizational theorists are loathe to acknowledge that management may be more art than science. In this respect, several myths exist regarding management, perpetuated by those who insist that management must be a science (Mintzberg, 1989). The myths include:

- A good manager is a reflective calculator.
- Management concentrates on exceptions.
- Managers use information that is systematic and well documented.
- Management is becoming more scientific.

Management is better described as a roller coaster ride through a three-ring circus.

Studies of what managers actually do contradict these myths. First, managers are hardly reflective, systematic calculators when 50 percent

of their activities take less than 9 minutes. Managers spend more than 30 minutes on one task only every 2 days, and in 368 observed contacts of managers with other individuals or groups, only 1 could be characterized as general planning. Managers move quickly from one brushfire to the next, and have little time to be reflective. A term born in the 1950s, *organized anarchy,* is the best descriptor.

Observation likewise does not bear out the perception that managers concentrate on exceptions, delegating all routine duties. Managers routinely see between 25 and 50 people, depending upon the organization and the specific management role. The notion that a police chief sees only her/his assistant chiefs below him and the city manager above him, is a myth that every chief or sheriff would recognize. Further, managers spend a great deal of time on ceremonial duties. Ceremonial in this sense is broadly defined, and may include such functions as simply appearing at a patrol shift roll call. The police chief or sheriff is there because he/she "should" be seen by the troops–a ceremonial function. Granted valuable information may be gained by such appearances, but the primary purpose is ceremonial, and it is a routine duty. Further, most problems managers deal with are not big picture issues. They are petty, but symbolically sensitive. Finally, managers find it extremely difficult to delegate many of these so-called routine duties. The totality of use of diverse information essentially prevents delegation. The observation that, "By the time I explain it all, I could do it myself," describes the situation.

It is likewise a myth that managers use information that is systematic and well documented. Managers obtain 80 percent of their information orally. They typically only skim written documents. When was the last time a police chief or sheriff you know sat down and read carefully through a voluminous document? The daily mail is not regarded as a resource of new information, but stuff to be gotten rid of. Importantly, strategic information is typically stale by the time it is written down. Hence, the use of oral information is essential.

Finally, it is a myth that the information age has made management more scientific. Management information reports are not irrelevant, to be sure. But they are only an incremental addition to the information managers already use. Managers describe most decisions as being made using judgment and intuition, not hard data. They are undoubtedly referring in this context to employing a sense of totality of information, including perceptions on organizational culture and an appre-

ciation for organizational history. Computerized data sources cannot convey that totality of perspective.

Nevertheless, information remains the key to effective management. The acknowledgment that formal, written, structured information is not as important as advocates of scientific management would suggest does not negate the importance of information, broadly defined. Managers must have a sense of the political institutions of which they are a part, the community as a whole, the profession of law enforcement, public administration generally, and, last but not least, their own organization. Every decision will be made in that broad context, and the more information a manager has, the better the decisions.

It should be recognized in particular that the role of a chief executive officer, i.e., police chief or sheriff, conveys a status that is unique. Lieutenants and captains will not have the same information access as a law enforcement agency's CEO. The formal authority and status which comes with the role begets information access. Information, in turn, helps secure the authority and status of the CEO position. *Ipso facto*, if a police chief or sheriff fails to obtain information, it may not be obtained at all–simply because subordinates do not have the position, status, or authority to obtain it. Acquiring information is at the core of the role of a law enforcement CEO.

### *The Evolution of Perspective on Administrative Decision-Making*

Information acquisition is only a prerequisite to the truly difficult element of a police executive's role–making hard decisions. No other area of organizational theory has evolved so dramatically in terms of what is viewed as appropriate or correct as decision-making processes. In other segments of organizational theory new perspectives or paradigms normally add to or modify existing perspectives. Thus, in terms of the organization of work, the principles approach added to, but did not replace, scientific management. In turn, the systems approach modified substantially, but did not entirely replace, the principles school. With regard to decision-making, however, current perspectives truly replace and contradict those previously held.

The initial view of what constituted appropriate administrative decision-making was premised upon Weber's ideal bureaucracy (Bolman and Deal, 1997). Max Weber was a nineteenth century German sociologist. In his world, organizations were managed through a process