

**SUPERVISING POLICE EMPLOYEES
IN THE TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY**

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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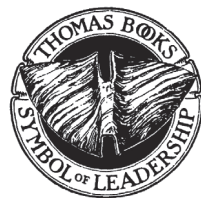
Chief Garner holds a master's degree in Administration of Justice. He writes and instructs widely on law enforcement leadership topics and has lectured for the International Association of Chiefs of Police and the FBI National Academy at Quantico, Virginia. He has authored 11 other books and over 200 magazine articles on law enforcement subjects.

SUPERVISING POLICE EMPLOYEES IN THE TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY

A Problem-Solving Manual for Law Enforcement Leaders

By

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*For
Law Enforcement's First-Line Leaders of Today
Who Will Become
Law Enforcement's Chiefs and Sheriffs of Tomorrow*

PREFACE

L leading first-line law enforcement officers is one of the most rewarding tasks in all of policing. It is also one of the toughest.

Whether you are an acting supervisor, corporal, sergeant, or some other variety of first-line leader, you are absolutely key to the success of your law enforcement organization. As every intelligent chief or sheriff knows, he can jump up and down and shout until his face turns purple and it won't matter a whit unless the first-line leader converts those directions, desires, and concerns into action by the cops in the trenches. Likewise, the officers at the pointed end of the stick probably realize that their complaints, concerns, and questions are unlikely to be answered without the assistance of the first-line boss. To repeat: the law enforcement supervisor is vital to the effectiveness, efficiency, and success of the agency employing him or her.

The purpose of this book is to provide the first-line leader with the tools he needs to excel in successfully handling all of his important duties. Short on theory and long on practical advice, it is intended as a "how to" handbook for the primary supervisor. Situated in the real world of policing as opposed to the theoretical one of the academic, the text contains pragmatic guidelines assembled by a veteran police chief who served for 15 years as a first-line leader.

Chances are, you are already a good leader. This handbook will make you better. It contains the information you will need to succeed as decision-maker, tactician, trainer, counselor, disciplinarian, and officer safety expert. It will help you accurately to evaluate your employees' job performance, serve as an integral part of the leadership team, and lead your people to deliver exceptional customer service. It will, in sum, serve as a true Handbook for leadership success.

As you doubtlessly have figured out for yourself, today's law enforcement employees are by no means identical in personality or work style to their predecessors of even a decade ago. But they are good people with outstanding potential. They, along with their more senior colleagues, are waiting for a great leader to bring out their best. That leader should be you.

G.W.G.

INTRODUCTION

Law enforcement represents one of the most critical, noble undertakings on the face of the planet. It employs some of the most courageous, compassionate people who inhabit that globe. Leading those special people to fulfill their critical roles as both service providers and guardians requires exceptional individuals with exceptional talents. Those individuals are the first-line supervisors of law enforcement.

To carry out their wide array of vital duties those supervisors require a whole toolbox of complex skills. This handbook was created with the purpose of supplying or, where already present, strengthening those skills. Assembled by a veteran police chief who served 15 years as a first-line supervisor, the book provides practical, “how to” advice for confronting and mastering the multiple challenges of the first-line supervisor’s life.

Chapter 1 will assist the corporal, sergeant, or equivalent in putting together the varied tools and talents he or she will require to be a successful leader. Chapter 2 delves into what is needed to establish a mutually beneficial relationship between the first-line leader and a group of subordinate law enforcement personnel. Chapter 3 covers the ins and outs of forging a positive relationship with the supervisor’s own boss.

Chapter 4 provides backup for the first-line leader faced with making the really tough decisions, while Chapter 5 lends guidance for applying those decision-making skills to tactical situations and critical incidents. Meanwhile, Chapter 6 offers suggestions for competently training police personnel to meet and master all aspects of the contemporary law enforcement officer’s incredibly difficult job.

Chapter 7 is designed to help the police boss address one of law enforcement’s biggest challenges: preparing officers to produce well-written, informative reports. Chapter 8 will assist the leader in evaluating his or her peoples’ mastery of this skill and many others. Preparing accurate, impartial, and meaningful employee performance reviews is one the supervisor’s most important duties. This section of the book will help him or her do it well. Then, Chapter 9 will assist the first-line leader with the most vital task of all: keeping his or her officers safe on the street.

The supervisor's sensitive role as employee counselor and confidant is explored in Chapter 10. Next, the first-line boss's obligations as disciplinarian and troubleshooter of employee performance issues are examined in depth in Chapter 11. The following chapter proffers pragmatic advice for dealing effectively yet compassionately with the "difficult" employee.

Chapter 13 furnishes recommendations for responding effectively and empathetically to the citizen with a grievance about a law enforcement policy, practice, or employee. Chapter 14 is devoted to helping police personnel best serve some of those same citizens. The chapter includes time-proven advice for leading team members to provide exceptional customer service for those paying the freight: the tax-paying public. Chapter 15 delivers "how to" guidance for the supervisor who has news media relations duties thrust upon him or her at or following a critical incident or similar newsworthy event.

The handbook's final two chapters strive to give the career-minded leader the skills he or she will need to survive and prosper in the law enforcement organization. Chapter 16 goes into the commonsense talents required safely to navigate the politics and intrigue to be found in virtually every law enforcement or other organization. Chapter 17 will assist the first-line leader in bringing it all together to be the absolute best he or she can be. This final chapter takes a look at leadership's ethics, the supervisor's role as a member of the leadership team, and how to get even better and stronger for the future.

This handbook will equip today's capable first-line leader to excel in his or her vital role of influencing the future of policing. Surely nothing is more vital to an increasingly complex and too-often-troubled society.

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**SUPERVISING POLICE EMPLOYEES
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Chapter 1

THE TOOLBOX OF A GREAT LEADER

Throughout your law enforcement career you have been assembling the tools that have made you a skilled investigator, a compassionate and competent cop. You have accumulated those skills, abilities, and knowledge from many different sources, not the least important of which has been experience. All of those things taken together have helped to make you the highly effective law enforcement officer that you are.

An effective leader needs a well-stocked tool chest, too. As a leader of law enforcement employees you will need every useful tool you can get your hands on and your mind around as you go about your duties of guiding and directing the efforts of others. There are plenty of things you will need to know. There are things you will need to do. You will find, in the unlikely event that you didn't already know it, that there is no greater or more valuable tool than personal courage. It will mesh nicely with your ability to serve as an exceptional role model for your people.

The process of assembling or adding to your leadership tool box begins with determining just what it is you need to know.

WHAT DO YOU NEED TO KNOW?

You cannot hope effectively and successfully to lead others unless you have first mastered some basic leadership skills. Some of these you may have picked up from life experience. Others may revolve around one of the most basic but powerful tools of all: plain common sense. Yet others you may have collected in the "welcome to supervision" classes your employer has sent you to as a new or prospective

supervisor. Still more you may have absorbed through your exposure to books, articles, and Internet content on the complex subject of leadership. Finally, you may have obtained even more practical assistance via wide-ranging conversations with successful, veteran supervisors.

It is just fine to assume that you already know a lot about what you are doing and how you are doing it. Self-confidence is a necessary trait for a good leader, too. But hopefully your store of knowledge includes one fact that every exceptional leader has learned by hard experience: you have never learned all there is to know. There is always more to grasp that will make you an even better, stronger leader. The journey to becoming a truly great leader is a never-ending one.

Every leader's book of knowledge, skills, and abilities reads at least a little differently than that of every other leader. There should, however, be a common core that every good leader shares. These people value such cardinal rules of leadership as:

- Praise in public; correct in private.
- Always tell the truth.
- Keep your promises.
- Demonstrate fairness and impartiality in all your actions.
- Strive to serve always as an exceptional role model for your people.
- Always give your best and expect the same of others.
- Be ethical always; follow the rules and don't cheat.
- Demonstrate loyalty to your peers, your subordinates, your superiors, and your organization.

Obviously, many more attributes of a great supervisor could be added to a list that would go on for pages. But you get the idea. Fill your toolbox with proven leadership skills. Then, learn how to use them well.

You should have a good grasp of the technical aspects of your job as well as your organization's policies, procedures, orders, and regulations. How do you check reports by computer terminal? What are the guidelines for taking a citizen's complaint on an officer? What needs to be done following an injury accident involving a police vehicle? And so on.

You likewise need to be knowledgeable about the life stories that are your employees, at least to the extent that you reasonably can

know them. Who are they? What do you know about their families, their history, their aspirations? Your agency's records can tell you some of this. Search them out. Talking with your people can tell you a lot more. You can learn much about what happened before you entered the picture. In other words, what does their past look like, good, bad, and otherwise? You need to know in order to do the best job of leading them.

By talking with your employees you can learn about their goals, desires, strengths, and challenges. By listening attentively you also can find out what your people want from you, their supervisor. That is an especially valuable piece of information to have.

Your leader's toolbox also should include a basic knowledge of human psychology. What makes people tick? How can they be motivated to excel? What miscues must you avoid in your efforts to lead them?

You should know as much as possible about the environment you all work in. What are the special challenges facing your organization or law enforcement in general just now? What guidance or directives have you received from your own supervisors? Where do you and your subordinates fit into the larger picture that is the law enforcement agency and the surrounding community of public safety consumers? All of these things and much more you need to know in order to be a truly effective leader. Ask questions. Seek answers wherever you can find them.

WHAT DO YOU NEED TO DO?

Once you have learned where it is you all are expected to go and what it is that you are expected to accomplish, you want and need for your people to follow you there. It is no longer enough to say simply "go do good police work." Life and the society you labor in are way too complicated today for general instructions to have great value. Your people will want to know the goals and objectives that you want them to meet. Most will want to see the bigger picture. They want to know where you are leading them. To gain their trust enough for them to want to follow you there, you must do several things, and do them well. Things such as:

Set the standards. You are the positive role model your employees need to see and hear. You cannot afford to let them down. You must set a great example.

Set and disseminate clearly the goals of the work group. This is the road map that you want your people to follow. But to do that they need to know what it says. Make your expectations as clear as you possibly can.

Keep the lines of communication open. It is the surest way to keep your team on task, clear on what it is they are supposed to be doing and how they are supposed to be doing it. Ask and welcome questions to be sure everyone understands expectations.

Establish personal connections. Some call it empathy or just plain caring. People are willing to do more and better work for someone they believe actually cares about their well-being. That someone should be you.

Be both fair and consistent. Your team members want to know what to expect from you. On the other hand, their own expectations of you include consistency and impartiality in the way you treat them. As you know, police employees can be a super-critical audience. Do not disappoint them.

Be truthful and honest with your subordinates. Unless they can have faith in your absolute credibility they will not trust you, with all the accompanying negative fallout that radiates from that lack of trust. Tell the truth even when you know the message will not be well received.

Represent their interests. Your people will expect you to go to bat for them when necessary. They want to know that you are in their corner, even when things are not peachy and they may have disappointed you. Representing them does not mean shielding them from earned consequences.

Display technical competency. Your officers won't expect you to be the best cop on the street or in the detective bureau. They *will* expect you to have a cop's sense and be able to do the basics of a cop's job if called upon.

Show loyalty in all directions. That means up, down, and sideways. You must support the agency's top leadership staff, your fellow supervisors, and your employees in every way in which it is ethical and lawful to do so.

Display vision. Share the bigger picture with your followers, not just what is expected of them today. Emphasize their role in the vision you and the organization's leaders are seeking. Recognize that they are intelligent people and can grasp it.

Exercise your common sense. Your subordinates will expect you to have it in spades. It will help you solve a problem for which no specific policies or guidelines exist. Common sense is the sum of life experience, native intelligence, and a "feel" for the situation at hand. Do not hesitate to apply it.

Be known for reliability. Your employees must have faith that when you say you are going to do something for them it is guaranteed to be done. A reliable leader keeps his word no matter what. If for some reason you cannot make good on a pledge you owe your people an explanation as to why.

At the same time, there are some broken tools that should never be found in your bag. Frequent displays of temper towards your subordinates should not happen. Yelling or cursing at your people is never acceptable, no matter how great the provocation. Playing favorites and showing partiality towards one or more of your employees is also unacceptable, as is holding a grudge and seeking the opportunity to "get even" with a subordinate. Distorting the truth through intentional omissions or outright falsehoods is likewise forbidden to the ethical law enforcement leader. Your believability must mean everything to you. Failing to show loyalty to anyone or anything is absolutely denied an honorable leader, as well. Finally, setting a poor example in anything is never acceptable behavior from a leader of your caliber. It cannot be allowed to happen.

Defective tools can cause a lot of damage. They even can be dangerous. See to it that your toolbox never contains any.

THE VALUE OF A POSITIVE ROLE MODEL

You are an exceptional leader. Or you will be one after just a little more work. Your goal is to have your employees want to be like you. That probably would be the highest compliment they could give you. You do what you expect to see them doing. You say what it is you want them to say. You act like you want them to act. And you do all of it consistently. There is no "day off" from being a great role model.