

ILEAA

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Auditors Association

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Enhancing Public Trust

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INTERNAL EVALUATION

Preface

The law enforcement profession has historically received strong public support. While community support continues to flourish, certain significant events that have occurred in our nation in recent years have raised questions about integrity, cast uncertainties upon ethical values, or criticized policy and procedure in law enforcement. Undoubtedly, there had been incidents that brought discredit to this profession, and thus tarnishing the professional image and reducing trust from the public. Yet, law enforcement is known to persevere through the toughest times because of the oath that was sworn before wearing the badge. As such, there is no better time to be mindful of every action, both on and off duty, since the impact, whether positive or negative, could be shared with everyone in this profession, regardless of jurisdiction, uniform, or location.

Individual Reflection

As recent events altered the public's perception of law enforcement, they serve as a reminder that each of us has a responsibility to enhance public trust through transparency and accountability. Each individual, regardless of rank or classification, has a stake in the success of an agency. It is every person's obligation to continue enriching positive relationships, both internally and externally with every stakeholder. Ideally, we want each employee to be loyal to the agency's mission and goals while not being influenced by the impacts triggered by society, technology, economy, environment, or politics. Nevertheless, each of us will eventually encounter challenges and obstacles that might be discouraging at times, even though we try our best to persevere through all adversities.

To begin this journey, it is critical to assess internal values, culture, and morale. Not only do they define the foundation of an agency, they also impact the future of an organization. Completion of a trend analysis subsequent to an internal assessment could further develop operational strategies to shape an organization into a desirable future. Accordingly, below are a few recommended considerations that could be implemented for any rank or classification.

Cultivate positive relationships with your direct manager, peers, and direct reports with the goal of earning their trust.

Establish and complete an agency environment assessment pertaining to internal trust. An anonymous survey could be developed to ask a series of questions to solicit details of levels of trust. These may include whether employees feel comfortable expressing opinions, believe they are valued, and have confidence in their superiors.

Analyze trends to identify strengths and weaknesses from the assessment. Determining the strengths could illustrate best practices while discovering the root cause of the weaknesses could allow agencies to initiate operational adjustments.

Share and discuss results with command staff. Be transparent with the findings with the intent of exploring the next best way of conducting business.

Look at ourselves through different lenses and perspectives. The law enforcement profession has many moving parts. As such, it is critical to actively listen and understand the needs and challenges of our personnel. Once these challenges are identified, strategic planning processes could be adjusted to overcome obstacles while implementing performance measures to improve efficiency and effectiveness.

Enhance trust and relationship with union representatives.

Be open and transparent with goals and objectives. Share the assessment results and work collaboratively to resolve challenges.

Resolve conflicts immediately with compassion and understanding.

Develop a shared vision that accomplishes departmental mission. There is no winning or losing when everyone shares and understands mutual goals.

Invest in your people.

Prioritize safety and wellness of your employees. The physical demands and mental stress have drastically increased in recent years. These factors not only affect their professional focus, but also their personal life. The law enforcement is a profession in which the employees may be "off the clock," but never "off duty" because they are expected to uphold the standards of excellence every minute.

Ensure relevant and up-to-date training is continually provided to your employees to maximize their knowledge, skills, and abilities to successfully accomplish their job. We cannot expect our people to perform at their best without proper training.

Provide individual coaching and mentoring as you identify future leaders through succession planning. This could be accomplished through job-shadowing, temporarily performing duties at the next level, and/or involving in executive tasks such as budget planning.

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Develop personal leadership plans for commanders, managers, supervisors, and rank-and-file employees. Each person has strengths and weaknesses, and a personalized leadership plan would tailor their individual growth.

Recognize efforts. It is not merely a piece of paper or a wooden plaque to hang on the wall. It is the pride of selfless acts that have achieved recognition beyond money and fame. Instilling such pride should be a continuous effort by every employee.

Reinforce organizational values.

Conduct a uniform inspection and pledge the oath again. Recount the badge pinning ceremony and the proud emotions each person felt that day. The badge is a symbol of trust from the public to give law enforcement the authority to enforce the laws.

Always lead by example. People in position of authority are held to a higher standard. Whenever there is a display of unethical, immoral, or illegal conduct, the credibility, respect, and eventually trust, would erode for an individual and the agency that the individual represents.

Complete meaningful performance evaluations to emphasize organizational values that were displayed by the employees. In essence, recognize their unwavering efforts and thank them personally for contributing successes throughout the year.

Transformation

When internal trust is strong and resilient, there will undoubtedly be increases in morale and productivity because people feel supported and valued. There will be a renewed sense of loyalty and commitment which would further enhance their tenacity when faced with adversity. While earning high levels of trust may not be a walk in the park, it is one of the fundamentals of leadership. As we continue to work towards elevating internal trust, we should explore measures to strengthen external trust, which will be discussed in a subsequent article.

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