Managing Change in Law Enforcement

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Abstract

Law enforcement is facing a number of very complicated issues today. Most officials seem to focus on implementing Community Oriented Policing Programs and other in vogue programs to deal with increased fear of crime. While these tasks are daunting they pale in comparison to the task of trying to manage the change. In this paper I first discuss the need for managing change. Following that I explain how Lewin's Three Step Model for Change has been used to develop a current model for change that is useful to us in learning to deal with change. Criteria for determining a strategy for change is examined nest. I then present the four different strategies for change. Although no specific methods are presented the reader will gain insight into how to determine which strategy will work best for each change. A conclusion section summarizes what I have learned in preparing this paper

Need to Manage Change

If you study the history of policing you find that periodically new innovations in the field sweep through law enforcement. Each new innovation is held up to be the solution to all the evils we experience in the field of law enforcement. It was not long ago that the accepted philosophy was that law enforcement agencies had to be made more professional. That they needed to distance themselves from the public they served in order to avoid the pitfalls that were part of society. The agency that was distant from the public was less likely to be influenced by the public and therefore less corruptible. At the time and even now strong arguments can be made in favor of this philosophy. However, the current philosophy that is dominating the field of law enforcement is Community Oriented Policing. Although the term ”COP” gets thrown around a lot it can generally be defined as letting the community have more influence with law enforcement. This is a significant change from the professional trend of the 1960's. Quite obviously in the last 40 years law enforcement has seen a complete reversal in the theory that dictates how our departments should operate. More recently, we are beginning to see the development of "Compstat" and similar programs. "Compstat" is still evolving and is not completely accepted within the field but it may indicate a swing back to centralized control of the police department. "Compstat" theories generally require rapid and accurate reporting of crimes and criminal activity. This data is managed and displayed via computers to allow police managers to identify and plan a quick response to problems. High-level police officials are the held accountable for the results their units achieve. Noticeably absent is

the input from the community. This appears to contradict many of the theories of "COP" and may signal the demise of it as the dominant philosophy within the field of law enforcement.

Law enforcement agencies are forced to deal with these changes in philosophy. It's clear that the only constant we deal with is change. Sometimes that change causes us to rely more on the general public, sometimes we rely on them less. Certainly no one can accurately and positively say what the field of law enforcement will look like in 20 years but I promise you we will have to undergo change to get there.
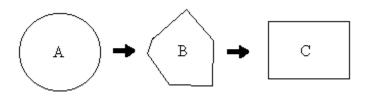
With this in mind we as leaders in the field of law enforcement must become familiar with change and how it occurs. By educating ourselves and our subordinates we can better deal with and manage the one constant we have within our profession. We must learn how to manage change.

Change Models

"Change was once a discrete event with a beginning, middle, and end. At the end things got back to 'normal.' Today, change is a constant; multiple changes happen simultaneously with no 'normal' in sight." (Changing the Way We Change. Page 1).

Lewin's Three Phase Model.

The process of change has been characterized as having three basic stages: unfreezing, changing, and re-freezing. This view draws heavily on Kurt Lewin's adoption of the systems concept of homeostasis or dynamic stability.

What is useful about this framework is that it gives rise to thinking about a staged approach to changing things. Looking before you leap is usually sound practice.(Nockols, 2000). Lewin's Model is best described with a diagram as in Figure 1.
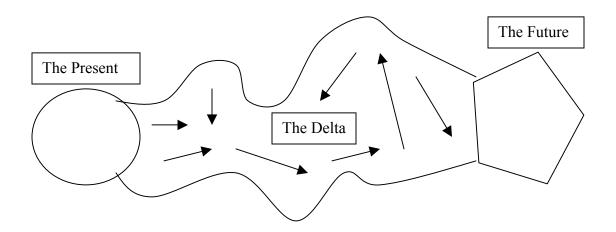

Where:

    A. Represents the Unfreezing Stage

    B. Represents the Change Stage

    C. Represents the Refreezing Stage.

Kurt Lewin basically said in order to effect a change you must first unfreeze the target group by preparing it for the change. Next you implemented the change affecting that target group. Finally you Re-froze the target group with the change in place. This is a very simple model. It contains the basic concept that governs change within all organisms. In her book "<u>Changing the Way We Change</u>" Jeanenne LaMarsh developed this theory into a theory that can be applied to modern field of law enforcement. LaMarsh maintains that there are three phase to change but found that Lewin's model was flawed because it treated change as a discrete event that had a beginning and a definite end. LaMarsh said that change couldn't be thought of this way. Instead she theorized that change should be thought of as a continuing on going process that does not end.

The Future, The Present, and The Delta

It seems that even change itself is changing. We must however make the effort to manage this change. The first critical element is understanding this modified or more modern diagram of change.

Change can be broken into three elements The Present, The Delta, and The Future. (LaMarsh p. 14)

The Future

The Present

The Delta

The Future

The Future

The only place we can never really get to is the only place as change agents we aspire to get to. The future is a paradox to us. No one can ever get there. As we start the process we have a vision of what we want but by the time we realize that vision it is no longer where we desire to be. This ever-elusive goal is the single most important aspect of the change process. The key to unlocking the future is balancing how you define that future. Change makes all humans uncomfortable so by giving a clear definite

understandable vision of the future you help to reduce the level of anxiety and fear about

what things will be like and therefore make the change process easier and more effective

However, this clear definite vision of the future dooms you to failure because by the time

you get to this vision it is no longer where you want to be. You are forced to develop

another vision and begin to move toward it only to realize once you get there it's not

what you want. The future must be defined so all know where they are heading but broad

statements that do not limit how you get there are absolutely critical. For example a

statement like "It is our goal to provide rapid police responses to the citizens of Any

Town by consistently reviewing methods of improving response times." Provide a better

vision of the true goal than a statement like. "We utilize an automatic vehicle locater to

reduce our response time from 12 minutes to 10 minutes." The first statement allows you

the flexibility to utilize whatever processes will reduce response time whether it is the use

of an AVL or restructuring the police districts. The second statement ties you to a

method and an end result. Who is to say that use of an AVL and restructuring districts

might lead to an 8-minute response time. By strictly specifying the desire end result

employees may stop short of what they are capable of just because they met your goal of

10 minutes. The future must be defined in a way that give vision and security yet does

not restrict you to an absolute path.

The Present

Simply defined as "The way it is" (LaMarsh p. 41) Any organization can easily

explain of define its current polices and practices. What is critical about the present is

understand its power to maintain itself. It seem the present is able maintain itself because

it essentially becomes invisible. Take this example from our fictional police department.

In an effort to closely monitor what occurs while he is off the detective division

supervisor requires that an arrest summary be forwarded to him from each shift at the end

of that shift. This summary includes the basic information about each arrest that the

detective division is involved in. The patrol division supervisor also requires his

subordinate to complete a shift summary that includes all the felony arrest that were made

during that shift. All felons are charged thru the detective division. It is absolutely clear

that the same information is included on both summaries. The information is gathered

and processed by the two separate chains of command. When you an employee about

this wasted effort they will likely say "That's just the way it's done". But if you ask them

if it makes sense they will respond in the negative. People seem to understand its

ineffective but accept it as if they don't see its ineffectiveness the present becomes

invisible.

The Delta (Change)

"Change is risky. People have to cope with the fuzzy, shifting future and the

presents strong hold. If they decide to change, they have to deal with the great chasm-the

delta." (LaMarsh p. 57) This is the phase we need to become more comfortable with.

This is that we are now force to operate in.

Criteria for Change

What are the critical factors you should consider when you determine which

strategy you are about to use to effectively have change within your department? In their

book Managing Organizational Change Patrick Conner and Linda Lake say some models

have you identify up to 13 factors to consider. Conner and Lake narrow that field to the 4

listed below which I feel are approiate to the field of law enforcement.

The four key aspects are: time available to effect the change, extensiveness of the

proposed change, characteristics of the targets of change, and the characteristics of the

change agent (Conner & Lake, 1994).

The first aspect to consider is the time available for the change. How urgently do

you have to have this change in place? It very clear that some changes will take much

longer than others. It may take just a few days to implement a change in the manner in

which written incident reports are submitted, but it may take several years to fully

implement all the changes needed to bring your department up to CALEA standards.

The second aspect to consider is the extent of the change in both scope and depth.

The scope of the change refers to the numbers of individual or organizational elements

this change will impact. Simply changes in how the property crimes squad operates are

easier to complete than changes that effect the entire detective division. Depth deals with

the number of behaviors that need to be changed. Again, changing how reports are

submitted is simple compared to the massive philosophical changes required to fully

implement Community Oriented Policing in your department.

The third aspect to consider is the favorableness of the change target. The change target in a law enforcement agency is normally that law enforcement officer. This aspect must be carefully considered. The first two aspects are easy to define. You can easily determine how long you have to implement the change and calculate the depth and scope in great detail. However, favorableness of the target requires you to step inside the minds of your officers. Each officer has experience a number of changes in his or her life not all of which have been favorable. These experiences color the perception they have of your perceived change. Remember to many of these officers the present as discussed above has become invisible.

The last aspect to consider is the favorableness of the change agent. Do the people who are responsible for implementing this change really support the organization's goals? You must also carefully consider just who the change agent is. All Police Chiefs run their departments but how much input do they have in the day-to-day operations of a patrol squad? In all but the smallest agencies the chief is forced to delegate his authority thru a chain of command down to the officer. This chain of command is an absolute necessity but it can actually for a barrier for the chiefs intended changes. The Team policing concept is an excellent example of the impact this element can have. The failure of Team Policing is largely attributed to middle management. "If the change agent does not have the appropriate resources, technical and interpersonal skill, or access to them, the change cannot be effected without somehow going back and restructuring the change situation or selecting new change agents." (Conner & Lake,

p107) Sergeants and Lieutenants were the driving force in its failure. Sergeants and

Lieutenants should have been the change agents not the change killers.

Strategies for Change

Although there are many techniques or procedures for change they call all be

grouped in to one of four strategies(Conner & Lake 1994). The four strategies are:

facilitative, informational, attitudinal, and political.

Facilitative Strategies

Facilitative strategies are those strategies that assist the members of a change-

target group in making change using their own abilities or resources in conducting that

change. A typical change in this strategy might be the Domestic Abuse squad developing

an informational program intended to intervene before abuse starts in the household.

This clearly is a change from the reactive nature of detective work to a much more

proactive nature. The squad itself has all the needed resources to complete the change

and should only require guidance (Facilitating) from the supervisor. Facilitative

strategies work best when the following assumptions can be made about the four key

aspects.

Time. The time required for a Facilitative strategy can very greatly simple

changes that are not that great in their extent can be handled rapidly while other changes

can take much longer.

Extent. Facilitative Strategies are useful when the extent of the change is great in

both depth and scope. These types of changes do require a high degree of commitment

from the target group.

Target Favorableness. Facilitative strategies work best when the target group is aware of the need for change and is ready to make a change. Exactly how the group comes to this decision is not really important just the fact that they made the decision is enough. Many supervisors are able to implant this idea in their subordinates' head thru a variety of means.

Agent Favorableness. Change agents need not have the overwhelming support for this strategy of change. They must have the time and resources available to truly facilitate the change but little commitment beyond that is required.

Informational Strategies.

Informational Strategies are the most frequently used methods by managers to overcome resistance to change is to educate people about the change(Conner & Lake 1994). This type of strategy is based on the assumption that people will operate in a logical manner. If they are presented with material that clearly outlines the need for change and the benefit they will reap they will accept the change and move forward with it.

Time. Informational strategies require time to implement. It takes time to present the required amount of information to even the most logical person. It takes even more time for him or her to make up their mind about the change.
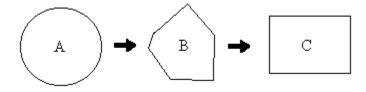
Extent. Changes that are broad in depth and scope are the type of changes you target with this strategy. In other words major changes that you want to educate the entire work force about. Normally this strategy requires a great deal of money to implement.

Target Favorableness. The target group may have been unaware for the need to change at the beginning of an informational strategy but will become more aware as time goes on. In the beginning the target group need not be favorable and may even be resistive to the idea of change. If you are successful in your educational efforts you will essentially change their minds before you change their habits. The target group must however be committed to the organization. They must be committed enough to at least receive the training of educational program and think about it and come to a logical conclusion. Unfortunately some people will not display this level of commitment to anything but themselves.

Agent Favorableness. Without a doubt the key to these types of strategies is having the change agents on board. The change agent must be committed to the change and the educational programs. Even non-committal statements like "Well, it might work" or "The boss says I gotta teach you guys this" can doom the process from the start. Informational strategies can take a long time to implement and the change agents need high levels of commitment to make it thru this extended process. The results however can have effects that are easy to maintain.

Attitudinal Strategies

Attitudinal Strategies. Lewin's Three Step Change Model as pictured below was discussed earlier as a basic theory of change. This model is also useful in discussing attitudinal strategies.

Where:

A. Represents the Unfreezing Stage

B. Represents the Change Stage

C. Represents the Refreezing Stage.

1.   Unfreezing: In order for changes to occur old attitudes must be loosened from their locked positions. The analogy is to thaw something frozen.

2.   Moving/Change: This step involves changing the attitude of the target group.

3.   Refreezing: This step involves locking in the changes you have made.

Attitudinal strategies are based on the philosophy if you change someone's attitude you will change their behavior. These types of strategy are best when you desire a long-term lasting fundamental change.

Time. As one would expect this type of strategy requires quite a lot of time to implement. You are attempting to change a basic attitude that people possess. The field of law enforcement the single best example is the effort to bring departments in line with the COP philosophy. Some departments have spent years attempting to effect this change and still are nowhere near being completed.

Extent. Because these types of strategies take so long to complete they should not be used for the more simple changes. Reserve this type of strategy for those extensive changes that have a lot of depth and scope.

Target Favorableness. The target group is likely either not aware of the need for change or actually opposes it. You use persuasive messages in an attempt to change the

attitude. In his book Organizational Behavior Stephen Robbins suggest these guidelines for changing attitude through persuasive messages.

Establish your credibility. Nothing undermines persuasive efforts more than lack of credibility. People don't want to listen to a person they don't trust of believe. Credibility is developed through demonstrating competence, objectivity, and high ethical standards.

Use a Positive, tactful tone. Assume the person you are trying to persuade is intelligent and mature. Don't talk down to that person. Be respectful, direct, sincere, and tactful.

Make your presentation clear. Before you can convincingly articulate your view to someone else, you need to be clear about what it is you want to say. Once your objective is clear, you should present your argument one idea at a time. Don't jump from issue to issue, and do avoid unrelated topics. Focus on your end objective, and then present your ideas in a straight path that will lead the person to the conclusion you want and the objective you set.

Present strong evidence to support your position. You need to explain why what you want is important. Merely saying your viewpoint is not enough.

Tailor your argument to the listener. Effective persuasion demands flexibility. You have to select your arguments for your specific target. Whom are you talking to? What are his or her goals, needs, interests, fears, and aspirations? How much does the target know about the subject you're discussing? What are his of her preconceived attitudes on this subject? How entrenched are those attitudes?

Use logic. While a logical, reasoned argument is not guaranteed to change another's attitudes, if you lack fact and reasons to support your argument, your persuasiveness will almost certainly be undermined.

As you become more and more successful in implementing this strategy the target group's commitment to the change should increase thereby creating a snow slide effect in that the strategy will become more and more effective at an ever increasing rate.

Agent Favorableness. Not only must the change agent be committed to the change he must also be committed to understanding why the target group is resistive to the change. As in informational strategies in this strategy the change agent is key to successful implementation.

Political Strategies.

Political Strategies. "Organizational politics involves those activities taken within organizations to acquire, develop, and use…resources to obtain one's preferred outcome"(Conner & Lake, p116). Political strategies depend on giving, withholding, competing, or bargaining for scarce resources.

Time. If time is short and members of the target group are reluctant to accept the change then a power type political strategy may be most expedient.

Extent. Extent itself does not determine whether a political strategy should be used. It appears that the more simple the change the more likely this type of strategy will succeed.

Target Favorableness. If members of the target group do not perceive the need for the change then a power type political strategy may be useful. Otherwise, target favorableness is not a concern in this type of strategy.

Agent Favorableness. By definition if this type of strategy is used the change agent is using his or her power to get what he or she wants. His or her level of commitment will by definition therefore be high.

Conclusion

Viewing the field of law enforcement from a historical perspective it is quite easy to see that change has been a constant in our field. Although the possibility exists that we have stumbled upon the single best philosophy in law enforcement and would never need to change again it is very doubtful this has happened. Instead we can expect history to repeat itself and we will be forced to deal with anther major philosophical change in our field.

Lewin's very basic three Step Model for Change served as platform for LaMarsh to develop her theory of The Future, The Present, and The Delta. LaMarsh encourages us to open up and be more accepting to change. In short we have to change our attitude about the process of change. Failure to do this dooms us to constant re-occurring failures as we attempt to implement changes within our departments. With a broad vision of the Future and an understanding of the grip the Present exerts upon us we can venture into the Delta without fear and begin to realize our potential in every broadening areas.

Conner and Lake provided us with the four most important criteria to consider when determining which strategy to use when implementing change. Time available, extensiveness, targets of the change, and change agents must be considered when determining which strategy to use to effect the change. The four strategies are Facilitative, Informational, Attitudinal, and Political. Each strategy has characteristics

that make it better for different types of change. By understand the criteria and strategies a manager can more effectively choose a path that will lead him to success when attempting a change.

After eight years I the field of law enforcement I have encountered a number of different managers. Almost all were ill equipped to deal with change. Part of the problem lies with those we manage. Police Officers have long been resistant to change. Its part of our culture to not trust. We are taught in rookie school that almost everyone will lie to you and once on the street this is confirmed through our contacts with the public. With this almost ingrained mistrust it is difficult for a manager to step up and say "Trust me the future will be bright". If he won't change his ways why should his Officers?

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