

The BJA Executive Session on

Police Leadership

2013

The BJA Executive Session on Police Leadership is a multi-year endeavor started in 2010 with the goal of developing innovative thinking that would help create police leaders uniquely qualified to meet the challenges of a changing public safety landscape.

In support of an integrated approach to creating safe and viable communities across America, the project directors recruited 20+ principals from a range of disciplines. The principals, in turn, led national field teams of practitioners focused on the work of policing and the organization of the future.

To gain new insights on leadership, the *BJA Executive Session on Police Leadership* engaged police chiefs in documenting their own paths and invited leaders to participate in various audio and video forums to tell their stories and discuss the future of policing and police leadership.

Please visit our website, <http://bjaleader.org>, to learn more about this project and to access a broad array of interactive, multimedia resources.

The principals are supported in their work by a team that includes project co-directors Darrel W. Stephens and Bill Geller, project strategist Nancy McKeon, and BJA Senior Policy Advisor Steve Edwards.

Creating Leaders for the Future: An Introduction

by

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The goal of The BJA Executive Session on Police Leadership was to develop new thinking that would help create police leaders uniquely qualified to meet the challenges of 21st century policing. Developing successful leaders is an ongoing, often elusive challenge for most professions and organizations. We also set out to address some of the barriers policing has faced over time in creating leaders. As one member of the senior project team put it: *We should seek to develop leaders “by design, not by default.”*¹

Leadership is often treated as a subject unto itself. While leadership can be said to have some universal attributes, it is also true that effective leaders must be grounded in the realities of their time. The BJA Executive Session on Police Leadership began its examination by looking first at the world leaders will encounter in the coming decades and the changes that will come in the work and organization of policing. Then we identified the kinds of leaders policing will

need and how we might ensure that people are allowed to acquire those traits and skills.

World of the Future

The world will change (is already changing) in some fundamental ways. Globalization and technology are causing power shifts and blurring longstanding boundaries. It is even possible that we are approaching the end of the era of institutional dominance. Historically, society's iconic institutions (education, journalism, etc.) have been built on highly specialized expertise delivered to the public through methods and channels designed and controlled by the institutions themselves. That model is shifting. Armed with the boundary breaking internet and the incredible reach of social media, people are creating alternative channels for the way they, for example, participate in the political process, consume news, pursue education and training, and enjoy the arts and entertainment. The hegemony of institutions has weakened considerably and **public trust in institutional legitimacy and authority has declined**. Consider the blogosphere where collective opinions of individuals can drown out and displace the voices of bona fide experts. This power shift can be saluted as a triumphant expansion of "small d" democracy but it places the burden on institutions and leaders to recognize and change—or perish down the road.

A different driver of our time, the Great Recession of 2008, has given rise to the concept of a "new normal," a sense that the economy will recover but not return to the way it was. Historically, in both the public and private sectors, economic downturns were to be survived with temporary retrenchments that would go away when times got better. "Doing more with less" was associated in the minds of employees everywhere with losing jobs or taking on extra work or hours. In the new normal of the coming decades, concentration on the most effective use of resources should be a strategic imperative not a cost cutting one. This shift in strategic focus has its own implications for institutions and their leaders.

Policing exists within the world of public safety. That world is changing in two ways. First, the concept of public safety is expanding to emphasize the importance of forging viable and sustainable communities. The early years of this century have seen a growing focus on questions such as "What defines viable and sustainable communities?" "How do we create them?" and "How do we identify and marshal the critical resources to make it happen?" Public safety is no longer the sole responsibility of police, fire, and emergency services. We all – public and private sectors alike – have a stake and a role in the creation of viable and sustainable communities. Successful communities of the future will be the product of many resources acting together – public safety is now a co-production.

The second way the world of public safety is changing is in the emergence of cities and municipal areas as the drivers of innovation. If public safety requires a broad lens, it follows that cities need to convene those who can broaden the lens. This rise of cities is also driven in large part by the decline in federal public funding. A recently elected U.S. senator stated that our cities will be the economic drivers of the country's success in the global economy.² Some see the America of the future as a network of cities.

This world of the future is both good news and challenging news for policing and its leaders. It is good news because policing has been experimenting with consolidation and

collaborations for some time, accumulating a body of experience and some successes. However, the experience is not widespread across the profession, and most current leaders admit that collaboration in the future world of public safety must be different. Members of the project's senior team recognize that police must come to grips with the fact that in a world of co-production, there are many tools in the toolbox.

Organization of the Future

The Organization (“Org”) of the Future was one of the major initiatives sponsored by The BJA Executive Session on Police Leadership.

It is important to note that the Org of the Future team from the beginning took on the organization as a system, not as a structure. Traditional structure as we know it may become an artifact of the 20th century. In a system, interaction, networks and process are the shaping forces. Thus, embracing the changing world of public safety, the team describes police at all levels working in networks within the department and with other municipal departments and community organizations.

Within this public safety delivery model, rank and title are less important than talent and non-hierarchical collaboration and problem solving. The model also requires — at all levels of the department — a broader knowledge base and a greater aptitude for problem solving and innovation. It pulls away from the command and control model, moves toward a horizontal/lateral performance model, and invites a redefinition of leadership and authority.

Leaders of the Future

The BJA Executive Session on Police Leadership turned to police leaders to learn how leaders actually develop rather than how they theoretically develop. Several police chiefs agreed to re-create their path to leadership positions and to reflect on those activities, people and events that proved most influential in their development. Their candid narratives revealed these key lessons: 1) there is no one linear path to leadership; 2) the leaders they are exposed to early in their careers make a difference; 3) the most pivotal events are often opportunistic or even accidental; and 4) many said they now wish they had had the benefit of self-reflection earlier in their careers.

Those insights are reinforced in audio interviews we conducted with other police leaders and in roundtable discussions with the Executive Session principals.

All of these reflective narratives gave us valuable insight into the way leaders actually develop. So, what do the world of the future, the organization of the future and the lessons from current leaders tell us about leaders of the future?

We think they tell us many things – for example:

- Police leaders of the future will run departments increasingly engaged in a new public safety paradigm.³ These leaders will be charged with framing the role police will play in that paradigm.
- Police leaders of the future will lead in an age of weakened institutions and eroding trust in their authority and legitimacy.

- Police leaders of the future will face the challenge of balancing the declining primacy of the command and control (vertical silo) system with the emerging network (horizontal) system —police at all levels working across municipal departments and out into the community in new ways. This new strategic balance will be moved along by budgetary necessity as well as performance imperatives.
- Police leaders of the future will have to take a broader, more inclusive, and more local approach to creating and strengthening additional leaders.
- Police leaders of the future will themselves need to embrace a new mindset about their role and what it means to succeed as a leader.

The Leadership Development initiative operated from the thesis that policing cannot succeed in the organization of the future with development models from the past. As outlined above, that belief is based on both external and internal realities.

The new approach to leadership development is laid out in three short papers and an interactive graphic.

- **Re-thinking Leadership Development.** This piece presents the case for a new approach to creating leaders. It outlines changes in the external world such as technology and advances in understanding how individuals learn. It also describes the venue we used to discuss leadership. In a section called “Stars and Stripes,” the authors turn a tongue-in-cheek but serious eye to the barriers inherent in the way we go about training and development – from “getting your ticket punched” to “copycat innovators.”
- **Shaping a New Environment: The Learner’s Marketplace.** In this piece, the authors lay out the new approach or model. We discuss the rationale for the new model and seven design components that shaped the marketplace concept. The marketplace, presented visually, is an urban, open landscape of beckoning billboards. We invite individuals to “start anywhere, but go everywhere.” We explain the four rules that inform the marketplace: 1) All learning is individual; 2) All experience is relevant; 3) Paths are unpredictable; and 4) Culture is the glue.
 - **The Learner’s Marketplace Links.** This paper ends with a link to the interactive graphic. You will see a landscape of billboards each of which has a pop up description. In addition to the link at the end of the paper, we provide a separate link that takes you directly to the marketplace.
- **The Role of the Leader at the Top.** This third paper draws from roundtable discussions we had with the Executive Session senior team throughout the project. The authors maintain that leaders develop in and because of the environment they are provided and that creating this new environment is one of the most important things the leader at the top can do.

The three papers build on each other but are also complete pieces on their own. We hope you read all three (they are downloadable). And we invite you to visit the marketplace often.

References

¹Kerr Putney, Deputy Chief of the Charlotte-Mecklenburg (North Carolina) Police Department. BJA Executive Session on Police Leadership Meeting, Fall 2012.

²Cory Booker (D-New Jersey), October 2013, Post-election interview. Booker was formerly the Mayor of Newark.

³In addition to the way the authors outline the new public safety paradigm, there are many complementary versions. In 2013, the Law Commission of Canada offered this view: “In the last several decades, we have seen the extraordinary growth of the private security sector, offering a wide range of services. However, it is not simply the case that private security is filling a void left by the public police. Today, it is more accurate to suggest that policing is carried out by a network of public police and private security that is often overlapping, complimentary and mutually supportive. Within this context, it is increasingly difficult to distinguish between public and private responsibilities.” *Law Commission of Canada. “In Search of Security: The Future of Policing in Canada.” Law Commission of Canada. Ottawa, Ontario, Canada. 2013. Page xiii.*

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