

The BJA Executive Session on

Police Leadership

2017

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, www.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 Nancy McKeon, and BJA Senior Policy Advisor Steve Edwards.

Selecting the Next Generation of Police Chiefs

by
Tim Gillette

How are emerging trends impacting law enforcement in the United States? How do police leaders lead their agencies amidst a volatile environment which reflects a growing distrust and disrespect of police officers? Are today's police leaders equipped with the knowledge, skills, abilities, and other characteristics (KSAOs) needed to succeed in their police chief roles? Will the selection criteria for future police chiefs need to change to accommodate a changing society?

These are all pressing questions confronting today's police leaders and city officials responsible for selecting their community's future police chiefs. In a recent national law enforcement study, 264 police chiefs (representing each state in the United States) were surveyed in an attempt to answer these questions. Specifically, the police chiefs were asked to assess how emerging social, economical, technological, and domestic terrorism trends are impacting their police chief roles and influencing the KSAOs needed to carry out those roles. The

emerging trends that were examined in the study included growing diversity in the community, growing diversity in the work place, prevailing economic constraints, rapidly changing technology, and increasing threats and acts of domestic terrorism.

In assessing these emerging trends, the police chiefs noted that each of the trends was having either some or a significant impact on their role as police chiefs and having a similar influence on the KSAOs needed to carry out their police chief role. The police chiefs also noted that because of these trends, there were certain KSAOs that were more important for police chiefs to develop and possess today than perhaps in the past. In addition, the police chiefs suggested that the selection criteria for future police chiefs be changed in regards to the amount and type of prior police experience, training, and education. A more thorough breakdown of the specific KSAOs and selection criteria identified by the police chiefs as being important for future police chiefs to possess is presented in this summary of the study’s findings and recommendations.

Knowledge

A large majority of the police chiefs (84% to 100%) rated each of the areas of knowledge listed in the survey as being either somewhat important or very important. As depicted in Table 1, the specific knowledge areas that were rated as very important by a majority of the police chiefs included knowledge of budget/resource management; community policing and crime prevention strategies; policing strategies for addressing crime, traffic control, and public safety; changing community and workforce values; dynamics of human behavior; local government issues and policies; technology systems and applications; social media practices and implications; program development and implementation; crime analysis and investigative methods; city, state, federal laws and resources; emergency response procedures; and diversity characteristics, benefits, and assimilation strategies.

Table 1 *Assessment of Importance in Areas of Knowledge Needed to Perform the Police Chief Role in the Midst of Emerging Trends*

Area of Knowledge	Very important	Somewhat important	Not important
Accreditation standards	36.4	48.5	15.2
Budget/resource management	89.0	11.0	0.0
Changing community and workforce values	70.1	29.2	0.8
City, state, federal laws and resources	53.8	45.1	1.1
Community policing and crime prevention strategies	72.7	23.3	0.0

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Crime analysis and investigative methods	57.6	42.0	0.4
Cybercrime	36.7	59.5	3.8
Diversity characteristics, benefits, and assimilation	51.9	43.9	4.2
Dynamics of human behavior	64.4	30.7	4.9
Emergency response procedures	51.9	46.2	1.9
Equal employment laws	41.7	53.0	5.3
High liability issues	79.5	19.7	0.8
Homeland security/domestic terrorism	33.0	61.7	5.3
Incident Command System	45.8	48.5	5.7
Labor negotiation issues and procedures	38.6	47.3	14.0
Local government issues and policies	61.7	36.4	1.9
Policing strategies for crime, traffic control, and public safety	71.2	28.0	0.8
Program development and implementation	54.5	42.8	2.7
Social media practices and implications	56.4	43.2	0.4
Technology systems and applications	61.4	38.6	0.0

Skills

A large majority of the police chiefs (94% to 100%) rated each of the skills listed in the survey as being either somewhat important or very important. As depicted in Table 2, the specific skills that were rated as very important by a majority of the police chiefs included skills in leadership, decision making, verbal communications, problem solving, written communications, collaboration, interpersonal relations, conflict management, coaching and counseling, financial/resource management, strategic planning, analysis skills, emergency management, negotiation, and performance management.

Table 2 *Assessment of Importance in Skills Needed to Perform the Police Chief Role in the Midst of Emerging Trends*

Skills	Very important	Somewhat important	Not important
Analytical	64.8	35.2	0.0
Coaching and counseling	80.3	19.7	0.0
Collaboration	86.0	13.6	0.4
Conflict management	83.7	16.3	0.0
Computer	33.0	65.2	1.9
Decision making	96.2	3.8	0.0
Emergency management	55.3	44.7	0.0
Financial resource management	77.7	22.3	0.0
Interpersonal relations	85.6	14.4	0.0
Leadership	98.5	1.5	0.0
Marketing	36.7	57.6	5.7
Negotiation	52.7	45.1	0.4
Performance measurement	51.1	48.5	0.4
Problem solving	95.1	4.9	0.0
Project management	54.2	44.7	1.1
Strategic Planning	76.5	23.1	0.4
Tactical/incident command	40.5	57.6	1.9
Technical competence	39.0	58.7	2.3
Verbal communications	95.5	4.2	0.4
Written communications	89.8	10.2	0.0

Abilities

A large majority of the police chiefs (95% to 100%) rated each of the abilities listed in the survey as being either somewhat important or very important. As depicted in Table 3,

the specific abilities that were rated as very important by a majority of the police chiefs included the ability to establish trust, confidence, and credibility; enforce laws fairly and impartially; exercise good judgment in making decisions; build relationships and partnerships; create and sustain an ethical organizational culture; ensure accountability by setting goals and maintaining standards; apply critical thinking to solving problems; assess and respond to the concerns of the community and city officials; apply appropriate leadership style when dealing with different situations and people; develop a learning organization committed to knowledge acquisition and continuous improvement; provide visionary leadership; work with persons of diverse backgrounds; manage stress and maintain composure; exercise cognitive and emotional intelligence in interacting with others; initiate, facilitate, and manage change; initiate practices to respect and promote diversity; leverage technology to improve efficiency; develop high performance teams; use power and authority to ethically and effectively influence others; and forecast trends impacting public safety.

Table 3 *Assessment of Importance in Abilities Needed to Perform the Police Chief Role in the Midst of Emerging Trends*

Abilities	Very important	Somewhat important	Not important
Apply critical thinking to solving problems	93.2	6.8	0.0
Apply appropriate leadership styles when dealing with different situations and people	92.4	7.6	0.0
Assess and respond to the concerns of the community and city officials	92.0	8.0	0.0
Build relationships and partnerships	93.9	5.7	0.4
Create and sustain an ethical organizational culture	94.3	5.3	0.4
Develop a learning organization committed to knowledge acquisition and continuous improvement	84.8	15.2	0.0
Develop high performance teams	67.4	30.7	1.9
Enforce laws fairly and impartially	97.0	3.0	0.0

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Ensure accountability and professionalism by maintaining standards	93.9	6.1	0.0
Establish trust, confidence, and credibility	99.2	0.8	0.0
Exercise cognitive and emotional intelligence in interacting with others	78.4	21.2	0.4
Exercise good judgment in making decisions	98.1	1.9	0.0
Forecast trends impacting public safety	63.6	36.4	0.0
Initiate, facilitate, and manage change	78.4	21.6	0.0
Initiate practices to respect and promote diversity	78.0	20.5	1.5
Leverage technology to improve efficiency	70.8	28.8	0.4
Manage stress and maintain composure	82.2	17.8	0.0
Provide visionary leadership	84.5	15.2	0.4
Use power and authority to ethically and effectively influence others	65.2	31.1	3.8
Work with persons of diverse backgrounds	83.0	15.9	1.1

Other characteristics

A large majority of the police chiefs (93% to 100%) rated each of the characteristics listed in the survey as being either somewhat important or very important. As depicted in Table 4, the specific characteristics that were rated as very important by a majority of the police chiefs included honesty, credible/trustworthy, dependable, competent, fair-minded, self-controlled, cooperative, adaptable, forward looking, supportive, socially and politically perceptive, self-confident, straightforward, inspiring, intelligent, determined, and innovative.

An analysis of the most important characteristics for performing the police chief role revealed a direct correlation with many of the leadership characteristics identified in prior research studies. For example, Kouzes and Posner (2012) identified the top eight characteristics that people look for in leaders as honesty, forward-looking, competency, inspiring, intelligent, broadminded, fair-minded, and supportive. Furthermore, Covey (2011) asserted that the most important characteristics for police chiefs and their officers to demonstrate is credibility and trustworthiness, as these are absolutely essential in creating public trust in the police. Covey noted that to earn the public trust, police chiefs must demonstrate “behaviors of character” by (a) talking straight, (b) demonstrating respect, (c) creating transparency, (d) righting wrongs, (e) showing loyalty, (f) delivering results, (g) getting better, (h) confronting reality, (i) clarifying expectations, and (j) practicing accountability.

Table 4 *Assessment of Importance in Other Characteristics Needed to Perform the Police Chief Role in the Midst of Emerging Trends*

Characteristics	Very important	Somewhat important	Not important
Adaptable	87.5	12.5	0.0
Ambitious	41.7	51.1	7.2
Broad-minded	83.0	16.3	0.8
Competent	95.8	4.2	0.0
Cooperative	88.6	11.4	0.0
Credible/trustworthy	99.6	0.4	0.0
Dependable	97.3	2.7	0.0
Determined	75.4	24.6	0.0
Fair-minded	92.8	7.2	0.0
Forward-looking	86.7	13.3	0.0
Honest	99.6	0.4	0.0
Innovative	73.5	26.1	0.4
Inspiring	78.4	20.8	0.8
Intelligent	78.4	21.6	0.0
Perceptive (socially and politically)	83.7	15.9	0.4

Risk-taking	37.5	56.8	5.7
Self-controlled	91.3	8.5	0.4
Self-confident	82.6	17.0	0.4
Straightforward	81.4	18.2	0.4
Supportive (caring)	85.6	14.0	0.4

Experience, Education, and Training

The largest majority of the police chiefs (70.4%) recommended that future police chiefs possess a minimum of 7 or more years of police management experience prior to being selected as a police chief. A large percentage of the police chiefs (39.6%) recommended that future police chiefs possess a minimum of 10 or more years of prior police management experience. These percentages, however, appeared to differ somewhat in regards to the type and size of the police agency that the police chief would be leading. In most cases, the police chiefs appeared to indicate that larger police agencies in urban and metropolitan areas would require greater amounts of prior police management experience.

In terms of education, the largest majority of the police chiefs (89.8%) indicated that future police chiefs should possess either a Bachelor Science degree or Master Science degree. Of these police chiefs, 43.2% recommended that future police chiefs should possess a Master Science degree. In contrast, only 54.6% of the police chiefs noted that they were required to have a Bachelor Science degree or Master Science degree when they were selected to be a police chief. These statistics indicate that the level of education will continue to have a greater significance when selecting future police chiefs.

In terms of the type of college degree, the majority of the police chiefs indicated three subject areas that future police chiefs should focus their studies on: Public Administration (72%), Organizational Leadership (68.9%), and Criminal Justice (56.8%). An interesting revelation here was the importance that the police chiefs attached to a degree in Organizational Leadership. While only 4.6% of the police chiefs had a degree in Organizational Leadership, 68.9% of them recommended that future police chiefs have a degree in this field of study.

And finally, in terms of police management training, the majority of the participants selected four training programs that future police chiefs should be required to attend. These programs included the FBI National Academy (87.9%), the IACP Center for Police Leadership (75.7%), the University of Louisville Southern Police Institute (68.2%), and the Northwestern University School of Police Staff and Command (58.7%). Two other popular training programs that also received some consideration by the police chiefs were the

Police Executive Research Forum Senior Management Institute for Police (42.4%) and the FEMA Emergency Management Institute (29.9%).

Conclusion

The findings in this study were predicated on the analysis of responses of current police chiefs throughout the United States to a survey questionnaire aimed at identifying the most job relevant criteria for selecting the next generation of police chiefs. Through this analysis, the study found that five emerging trends involving social, economic, technological, and domestic terrorism factors were either significantly or somewhat impacting the role of the police chief and influencing the KSAOs needed to perform that role. The study also found that for current and future police chiefs to be effective in responding to these emerging trends, they will need to develop new KSAOs and or enhance their current KSAOs. Additionally, these police chiefs will need to possess certain levels and types of prior law enforcement management experience, training, and education.

In identifying the most important KSAOs, law enforcement management experience, training, and education that future police chiefs should possess, this study has provided police leaders and city officials helpful insights into the most relevant job criteria that should be considered when selecting their future police chiefs. In providing these insights, the study set forth the following recommendations.

1. City officials should obtain the input of their communities in determining the criteria to be used in selecting their police chief. As such, they should afford the community the opportunity to participate in the selection process, so they can ensure the police chief understands the needs of the community and possesses the KSAOs, experience, training, and education to lead their agencies in the face of increasing demands being placed on police chiefs in the midst of the social, economic, technological, and domestic terrorism trends examined in this study.

2. In developing the selection criteria for their future police chiefs, city officials should examine their current job descriptions to ensure they reflect the changing times and needs of their community, especially in consideration of the emerging social, economical, technological, and domestic terrorism trends that are impacting their communities. Moreover, the city officials should be willing to modify the selection criteria and include the critical KSAOs that are most relevant to the changing and expanding role of the police chiefs in the midst of these emerging trends. A significant number of these critical KSAOs were identified in this study.

3. In establishing the selection criteria for their future police chiefs, city officials should consider critical and sometimes new criteria regarding the type and level of law enforcement experience, training, and education that police chiefs should be required to possess. In this regard, such selection criteria should consider such considerations as the candidate's: (a) knowledge of diversity characteristics, strategies, and assimilation practices, as well as procedural and social justice; (b) skills in collaboration, forecasting, strategic planning, and finance/resource management; (c) abilities to exercise emotional in-

telligence, build community relationships based on trust, create and sustain an ethical organizational culture, build learning organizations, and leverage technology (i.e., equipment and systems) to improve communication, efficiency and professionalism; (d) personal characteristics to include honesty, intelligence, credibility/trustworthiness, forward thinking, perceptive (i.e. socially and politically) and adaptability, (e) prior experience in building community partnerships, working on community committees and projects, securing federal resources, leveraging technology, and responding to acts of domestic terrorism; (f) advanced education to include a Master Science Degree in Public Administration, Organizational Leadership, or Criminal Justice; and (g) specialized police leadership and management training in such subject areas as ethics and integrity, emergency management, cultural and generational diversity, problem solving, and community policing to include an emphasis on procedural and social justice.

4. In training and selecting the next generation of police chiefs, the most important criteria for police leaders and city officials to consider is the ability of the police chief to lead his or her police agency in an ethical manner that ensures public safety, procedural and social justice, and instills public trust and confidence. For this reason, city officials must ensure their selection criteria includes the ability to apply effective leadership models that can promote change, build community partnerships, and improve the effectiveness of their police organizations in meeting the needs of their communities. One such leadership model is the SERVE model proposed by Blanchard and Miller (2014), which emphasizes key leadership practices that include seeing the future; engaging and developing others; reinventing continuously; valuing results and relationships; and embodying the values of fairness, integrity, respect, service, and trust.

5. When selecting their future police chiefs (and evaluating their current police chiefs), city officials should always consider the character and integrity of the candidates, as well as their commitment and ability to serving all persons in their community.

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