

The BJA Executive Session on

# Police Leadership

2018

*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](http://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.

## Profile of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Leader

by  
**Shon F. Barnes**

President Obama's 21<sup>st</sup> Century Report on Policing profiled the pillars of what an agency of the future should look like. The report detailed, through the work of police leaders and community leaders, the much needed focus (or re-focus) on the importance of police-community engagement and problem solving. The report did not however, profile what the leader of a 21<sup>st</sup> century agency should look like. Police agencies are after all, complex systems and subsystems made up of human beings. Human beings with the capacity to grow and develop the skills necessary to create a 21<sup>st</sup> century police department. The good news is that great police agencies are not born. Great police agencies are created by leaders with the vision and creativity to see opportunities for improvement where others see barriers to success. If the concept of great police agencies seems obtainable then why are all police

agencies not working to their highest potential? The answer is simple. Leadership matters. Leadership matters to officers, employees, and certainly to citizens. The good news is that leadership is a skill. Skills can be developed and refined through a process of education and training. To this end, what leadership skills or profile will be necessary to lead the 21<sup>st</sup> century police department? The following provides an overview of what the profile of the 21<sup>st</sup> century leader might look like.

Leadership is an influence process forged through training, education, experience, and self-development. Through this developmental process a person creates two versions of themselves. One version is created through formal training and the other version is created through lived experiences, which shape their worldview. To this end, we have a quantitative self and a qualitative self.

A leader's quantitative self refers to the tangible dimensions which qualify a person to apply for a leadership position. These dimensions include: years of service; years of command level experience; age; formal education completed; and work experience. The 21<sup>st</sup> century leader should have adequate years of service. However years of service is a poor indicator of success. It is more important to have a record of accomplishment than it is to simply have 20 years on the job. Too often in police work, leaders at all levels in the agency are chosen based on their seniority rather than their ability to lead. As a result, the 21<sup>st</sup> century leader may be junior in tenure compared to his subordinates. Age is of course closely related to seniority. As police departments build collaborations with public, private, and military organizations, leaders may enter the agency at all levels with different skill sets. Senior command staff members should be aware of this dynamic and seek to promote this new cohort while taking advantage of the skills this cohort have learned through the private and government sector.

Formal education is possibly one of the most important dimensions in this section. Formal education is intended to expand one's worldview and most importantly, introduce the concept of empirical based decision-making. The completion of formal education programs includes bachelors, masters, doctoral, and professional education. The 21<sup>st</sup> century leader must be well educated. The leader must encourage his or her followers to pursue education and acknowledge those that seek educational opportunities for improvement. The leader must send a clear message to the public, that the agency is a well-trained, well-educated, organization comprised of professionals.

Work experience is a very different concept than experience at work. Leaders must understand that time in service is a quantitative measure. What matters are how the time in-service was utilized. To this end, leaders should clearly define what an achievement record consists of, and how

to measure these accomplishments against time in-service. Consequently, those who are senior in their service years can still be extremely valuable to the leader and the leader's development through their mentorship and capacity for relationship building.

A leader's qualitative self refers to the leader's belief system and his or her ability to operate within the human resource framework. The qualitative self is a measure of "who you are" as a human being. Leaders operating within the 21<sup>st</sup> century police department must embrace the community, while leading others to view the police as inclusive members of the community, and not exclusive members of the community. The 21<sup>st</sup> century leader who masters his or her qualitative self understands group dynamics, transformational leadership and servant leadership, and the development of a global mindset.

All leaders will and must operate within groups. Developing and understanding the dynamics associated within these groups is extremely important. Within groups there are often advocates and distracters. Those experienced in leadership will affirm the difference is not always obvious. In this dimension the political frame applies. The political framework identifies with leaders who understand the political reality of organizations. Leaders operating in this frame possess the tactics and energy to navigate the political landscape. The political framework's metaphor according to Bolman and Deal<sup>1</sup> is a jungle (e.g., a place whereby the rules are survival of the fittest). In this framework there are hidden agendas, competition for resources, strategic alliances, and group dynamics. Leaders operating in this frame should be careful not to practice self-serving leadership and/or pseudo-transformational leadership in pursuit of goals. However, this approach may be appropriate when resources are scarce, and when there is goal value conflict which may require the establishment of a strategic alliance<sup>2</sup>. A strategic alliance refers to the leader's ability to form partnerships (in and out of police agencies) to achieve goal attainment.

Two leadership theories that are essential to the effective leadership of the 21<sup>st</sup> century leader are transformational and servant leadership. Both approaches are important to serious leaders because the practices are focused on the long-term successes of the subordinate, as well as, the organization. Effective leadership is concerned with vision and direction which are both important elements of each practice. Organizations consist of human beings, and leaders should focus on the

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<sup>1</sup> Bolman, L. G., & Deal, T. E. (2013). *Reframing organizations: artistry, choice, and leadership*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, a Wiley Brand.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

developmental needs of staff members. Transformational leadership is a style of leadership characterized by leaders who work intentionally to create a positive change (or transformation) in followers through the creation of a shared vision. Northouse<sup>3</sup> suggests that transformational leadership is a process that changes and transforms people through a shared vision, ethics, and long term goals. It is concerned with treating people as “full human beings” which places an emphasis on personal relationship building. Bernard Bass<sup>4</sup> (in his leadership continuum) referred to transformational leaders as those who possessed the four I’s of leadership. This refers to: Idealized Influence, Inspirational Motivation, Individual Consideration, and Intellectual Stimulation.

Idealized influence refers to leaders who serve as positive role models for followers and are admired for their authenticity. Inspirational motivation refers to leaders that have the ability to inspire and motivate followers. Leaders with the ability to motivate ones’ understand regarding the importance of creating a shared vision and establishing worthwhile goals. Blanchard<sup>5</sup> refers to this concept as “leading at a higher level”. Blanchard defines leading at a higher level as “achieving worthwhile goals while taking into consideration the wants and needs of others.” Individual consideration occurs when leaders demonstrate a genuine concern for the needs and feelings of followers. In this regard, followers appreciate being treated as individuals and having their personal needs meet. Leaders who practice this concept take the time to establish relationships with followers and are sensitive to their personal and professional needs. Lastly, intellectual stimulation refers to leaders who challenge followers to be innovative and creative. Intellectual stimulation is one of the main elements of community policing. Community policing is a style of police work that allows police officers at any level in the agency to problem-solve neighborhood issues without the hurdle of the traditional red tape. Officers are encouraged by leadership to be creative and are given the opportunity to use their talents.

Servant leadership is a style of leadership that is focused on the needs of followers<sup>6</sup>. Servant leaders put followers first and has two important elements: (1) leadership (which is an operational framework concerned with vision and direction) and (2) service (which is a human resource

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<sup>3</sup> Northouse, P. G. (2016). *Introduction To Leadership: concepts and practice*. Place of publication not identified: Sage Publications.

<sup>4</sup> Bass, B. (1955). *Outline of a theory of leadership and group behavior*. Ft. Belvoir: Defense Technical Information Center.

<sup>5</sup> Blanchard, K. H. (2010). *Leading at a higher level: Blanchard on how to be a high-performing leader*. Harlow: Financial Times Prentice Hall.

<sup>6</sup> Northouse, P. G. (2016). *Introduction To Leadership: concepts and practice*. Place of publication not identified: Sage Publications.

framework concerned with service to others through empathy, and selfless public service). Servant leaders are not self-serving leaders. They have the ability (and the authority) to turn the traditional hierarchical structure of the organization upside down. This dimension is characterized by leaders who allow their subordinates to participate in the decision making process and encourages a growth mindset.

The tragic events of September 11, 2001 served as a grim reminder that what occurs globally may effect what happens locally. The 21<sup>st</sup> century leader must pay attention to global politics. This includes issues of foreign terrorism, war, immigration, and refugee situations. A specific focus must also be placed on the supply and demand of illegal narcotic drug sales.

The profile of the 21<sup>st</sup> century leader is one of great importance to the success of the 21<sup>st</sup> century police department. Leadership matters to the success of this profession. Leaders must understand these dynamics and most importantly work toward their accomplishment. The good news about leadership is that leadership is a skill, and skills can always be developed with the right mindset.

This paper was developed by the “Leader of the Future, Next Generation Leaders” initiative of the BJA Executive Session on Police Leadership.

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Cite as: Barnes, S. F. (2018) “Profile of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Leader.” A paper of the BJA Executive Session on Police Leadership. Washington, DC: Bureau of Justice Assistance, U.S. Department of Justice; and St. Petersburg, FL: Center for Public Safety Innovation, St. Petersburg College.

4/19/2018

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This project was supported by Grant No. 2009-D2-BX-K003 and 2015-CP-BX-K003 awarded by the Bureau of Justice Assistance to St. Petersburg College. The Bureau of Justice Assistance is a component of the Office of Justice Programs, which also includes the Bureau of Justice Statistics, the National Institute of Justice, the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, the SMART Office, and the Office for Victims of Crime. Points of view or opinions in this document are those of the author and do not represent the official position or policies of the U.S. Department of Justice.



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