

## **IPMAAC 2000 Paper**

**TITLE: A Synergistic Alternative to Traditional Police Promotionals: The Rest of the Story**

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### **ABSTRACT**

Based on recommendations from Police Officers, focus groups, supervisors, professors, union leaders, and others, Civil Service developed an innovative synergistic approach to the promotional process for Police Sergeant. The approach resulted in reduced adverse impact, better prepared Police Sergeant candidates and a process that addressed many of the concerns raised by candidates.

### **THE PROBLEM**

- The Louisville Division of Police was faced with the same dilemmas as many Police Departments today: seasoned officers who did not want to get promoted for various reasons; officers getting promoted with little or no preparation for the duties of a supervisor; and valuable officers who avoided the promotional process because of perceptions of bias, test anxiety and/or a lack of study skills.

### **THE SOLUTION**

- Civil Service talked with focus groups, Police Officers, union leaders, supervisors, and professors to ascertain issues preventing candidates from applying for the position of Police Sergeant, to determine Police Officers' perceptions about the previous promotional process to Police Sergeant, and to solicit their suggestions to improve the promotional process.
- After discussions of the results of the focus groups and other information gathering, we decided to improve on an idea that the Louisville Division of Fire had implemented successfully: Train candidates for promotion PRIOR to testing them.
- The new process included classes over the material covered on the test and two tests instead of one to reduce the amount of material covered on a given examination.
- Police Sergeants and above and Civil Service staff were trainers. Trainers were chosen based on their expertise and areas of interest.
- A team-based approach to teaching was used so students received different perspectives and as a contingency in case a trainer became unavailable.
- The same classes were offered at least four times a week at different times of the day to accommodate different shifts, detail assignments, outside work and child care concerns. Videotapes of classes were made. Candidates could obtain copies.
- The classes emphasized practical applications of the reading material. The goal was to explain by example and present the material in more concrete terms to aid those who have trouble with abstract concepts. Students were also able to ask for clarification.
- We emphasized the value of group studying.
- In addition to the topics identified in a job analysis for the position of Police Sergeant, we started with a class on note taking and included a class on the job simulation process to demystify the process and help candidates prepare.

- The written exams were given in two parts to coincide with the classes. Attendance at classes was not mandatory, but applicants were required to take both tests and a job simulation to be placed on an eligibility list. Reading assignments were given to everyone. Those who opted to study on their own were allowed to do so.
- Civil Service constructed, administered, and scored the exams, which consisted of multiple choice questions over the written material covered in the classes. Instructors highlighted key information and gave pop quizzes to help guide the Civil Service staff toward the most important information the candidates needed to know. Civil Service staff members who were writing the test items also viewed either the class or videotape of the class.
- The written exams were pass/fail and were not weighted in the final score for ranking on the eligibility list. However, written test scores determined which candidates went on to the job simulation.

## **REACTIONS**

### **Minority Applicants' Reactions to the Process**

Three members of the Minority Affairs Committee of the Fraternal Order of Police (FOP) met with Jeff Prewitt and Anne Russo regarding the 1998-1999 Police Sergeant Examination. Their view toward the last Sergeant's exam was favorable.

Generally, they liked the following:

- The written exam was split into two parts; each part covered half of the study material. It gave candidates more time to absorb the material and really learn it instead of just studying the highlights of the material for a test.
- The written test was pass/fail instead of ranked. This gave everyone a fresh opportunity to prove himself or herself on the job simulation. It created hope rather than despair at going into the process with part of your grade already determined.
- Candidates were audio taped rather than video taped when responding to the job simulation exercises. This allowed candidates to focus on the problem at hand rather than how they should present themselves to a TV camera.
- The classes covering the material and the instructors were really good. There may have been some outdated instructors but in general, the instructors were helpful.
- Instructors who taught them the difference between Policy and practice were helpful. Good instructors emphasized that testing covered Policy as written, not as practiced.
- Instructors were those who had been through the testing process and had been successful in testing. They were not just the Chief's Staff, the Training Staff, or whoever had time to teach.
- Classes were given more than one time. This allowed flexibility of schedules and even repeat attendance when necessary.
- Videotapes of classes were made. This provided another method of studying the material.
- The process in general allowed them to study for the job of being a Sergeant not just studying for the test. They have been able to quote policy and apply the supervisory techniques that they learned in the classes to the job. Anecdotal evidence of roll call training was provided by one of the candidates who was promoted.
- The test preparation process was formalized and made available to all candidates. It was not just a few select people who wanted their friends to succeed by training only their friends. Study techniques were taught to every candidate who wanted to make

an effort. Candidates who did make an effort and studied actually ended up at the top of the list.

**While, in general, the process was successful, some improvement is always possible. They thought the following could improve:**

- The reading material distributed was missing information. The Division of Police will need to set up better controls for this. Civil Service will then give a list of all materials that should be included so the applicants can immediately check to insure all materials are in their set of copies.
- The time allotted for some classes was just too short for the amount of information that they contained. Two candidates are letting us know which classes so we can arrange for more time.
- Some instructors gave practice scenarios. Candidates thought more practice scenarios would be better. Civil Service could require that of instructors.
- One candidate suggested a review session be conducted. All the instructors could be available for questions about a week prior to the two written tests.

**Negative Views of the Process:**

It is important to note that there are still many who think that the written test should have been weighted and counted as part of a candidate's score for determining his/her rank on the eligibility list.

- The process was met with great resistance from the FOP (president and attorney) who believed the written test should be weighted. This led to wanting to include test weights in a union contract.
- The current administration was reluctant to implement this process for the next level (Police Lieutenant) because of the overtime costs involved and the FOP concerns.
- The process was seen to "benefit only African Americans" at the expense of those who "already know how to study".
- The process required a great deal of overtime and extra work for LPD and LCSB.
- The testing was seen as "uneven" because there was so much study material for a written test that was only pass/fail.
- The whole concept was perceived as too much of a change all at once.
- The training would have been improved if instructors showed more practical applications of the resource material.
- This was a great deal more work for the testing staff. However, the testing supervisor was pleased with the results.

## **RESULTS**

### **The process:**

- reduced adverse impact
- resulted in better prepared candidates
- made test preparation for candidates easier and more convenient
- increased candidates expectations and preparation
- changed the culture of “learned helplessness and victim mentality” to one of “We can succeed if we prepare”
- The gospel of preparation was acknowledged
- Two written tests instead of one was well received by all.

### **Table 1: Candidates’ Rankings on the 1997 Police Sergeant Eligibility List by Race and Sex**

**This list was established prior to the implementation of the process just described.**

### **Table 2: Candidates’ Rankings on the 1999 Police Sergeant Eligibility List by Race and Sex**

**This list was established after the implementation of the process just described.**

## **CONCLUSIONS**

### **Reasons why the process showed improvement in reducing adverse impact**

- Better prepared candidates
- Formalizing the informal organization
- The department is changing. We have young African Americans who are more willing and able to compete for promotionals.
- We took away everyone’s excuse not to prepare and participate.
- We reduced the negative expectations of African Americans (by grading the written test pass/fail and by making training available to everyone).

This effort was successful only because all parties involved cooperated. The Police Department provided the resources, Civil Service coordinated the effort, and the candidates availed themselves of the resources. They used the techniques taught in the classes and studied the material.

Is this the Hawthorne effect at work?

**Table 1: Candidate Ranking on the 1997 Police Sergeant Eligibility List  
by Race and Sex**

Race	Sex	Rank	Status
W	F	1	AP
W	M	2	AP
W	M	3	AP
W	F	4	AP
W	M	5	AP
W	M	6	AP
W	M	7	AP
W	M	8	AP
W	M	9	AP
W	M	10	AP
W	M	11	AP
W	M	12	AP
W	M	13	AP
W	M	14	AP
W	F	15	AP
W	M	16	AP
W	M	17	AP
W	M	18	AP
W	M	19	AP
W	M	20	AP
W	F	21	AP
W	F	22	AP
W	M	23	AP
W	M	24	AP
B	M	25	AP
B	F	26	AP
B	M	27	AP
B	F	28	AP
W	M	29	AP
W	M	30	AP
W	M	31	AP
O	M	32	AP
W	M	33	AP
W	F	34	AP
W	F	35	AP
W	F	36	A
W	M	37	A
W	F	38	A
B	M	39	A
W	M	40	A
W	M	41	A

AP= Appointed

A= Active (on list but not yet appointed)

Note: This table is for the list established prior to the implementation of the process described.

**Table 2: Candidate Ranking on the 1999 Police Sergeant Eligibility List  
by Race and Sex**

Race	Sex	Rank	Status
W	F	1	AP
B	M	2	AP
W	F	3	AP
B	M	4	AP
W	M	5	AP
W	M	6	AP
W	M	7	AP
W	M	8	AP
W	M	9	AP
W	M	10	AP
W	M	11	AP
B	M	12	AP
W	M	13	AP
B	M	14	AP
W	M	15	AP
W	M	16	A
W	M	17	A
W	M	18	A
W	M	19	A
W	M	20	A
W	M	21	A
W	M	22	A
W	M	23	A
W	M	24	A
B	M	25	A
W	F	26	A
W	M	27	A
W	M	28	A
W	F	29	A
W	M	30	A
W	M	31	A
W	M	32	A
W	M	33	A
B	M	34	A
B	M	35	A
W	M	36	A
B	M	37	A
H	F	38	A
B	M	39	A
W	M	40	A
W	M	41	A
W	M	42	A
W	M	43	A
B	M	44	A

AP=Appointed

A=Active(on list but not yet appointed)

Note: This table is for the list established after the implementation of the process described.