

A BLUEPRINT FOR ENHANCING INVESTIGATIVE EXCELLENCE POLICING AS A TRADECRAFT

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Policing today is referred to as a profession. The desire to move off the front line, out of a uniform, seems to start earlier and earlier in today's police membership. At some point in the last 20 years the current focus of police organizations moved from investigations to leadership. Not leading investigatively, but leading people. There are PhD programs in policing leadership, management, and other forms of getting personnel to believe in and work toward achieving organizational goals. American businessman Harold Geneen once said, "Leadership cannot be taught. It can only be learned." In regard to the foundation of policing and the role of investigative excellence, I provide the following submissions. Unlike leadership, investigations can and should be taught. A lack of focus on investigative tradecraft has stunted our ability to learn superior investigative skills, and as a result we are not serving the public in the best manner possible.

Let me clarify one thing, policing is not a profession, it is a tradecraft. Undergraduate or graduate degrees do not make you a better investigator. There are no university programs that make a great investigator. Policing may not be a profession, but in no way does that say or imply that police are not expected to be professional. It simply means there is an on-the-job learning component, or apprenticeship. During the police officer's career, it is during the time on patrol that a police officer is taught the skills necessary to effectively fulfill his or her role. I cannot emphasize enough how this very important component of police work is being overlooked. The rash of retirements, people quitting to move on to other jobs prior to retirement, and the desire of members to get out of front-line policing as soon as possible, results in a lack of skilled investigators. A three-year member as a patrol training officer has not yet reached the "journeyman" stage in policing and therefore is at a disadvantage when asked to teach the important skills of investigations. This lack of proper tutelage in the initial stages of many young police officers' careers has a lasting ripple effect on the entire service, and we are definitely seeing this in the quality of our investigations today.

The public demands that we be adequate at investigations; I assert we should strive for investigative excellence. Police organizations, as well as the investigating police members, are liable for inadequate police investigations as set out in *Hill vs. Hamilton-Wentworth*. It is time we arm our police officers with the investigative skills and abilities needed to do the job they have been sworn to do. The police officer's tool belt should not only contain a sidearm, CEW, and handcuffs, it needs a working knowledge of the Canadian Criminal Code, interviewing techniques, warrant writing, photo lineups, covert operations, and wire taps. The training regimen recruits go through has grueling amounts of Page 54 officer safety and firearms training. In no way am I saying this is not necessary, but use of force and firearm use compose speculatively 2–4 percent of an officer's duties.

Today's police constable has become somewhat of a report writer, rather than an investigator. The Edmonton Police Service has started the Level 200–400 ISEP courses to teach investigations in a classroom setting. These courses are scenario based and are a move in the right direction to teaching the skills necessary to effectively investigate a serious occurrence. When the Northern Alberta Institute of Technology teaches an electrician the classroom work, that electrician is not suddenly a journeyman. The apprenticeship continues past the classroom and into the field.

The first phase in the investigative blueprint is ensuring quality investigators return to the patrol function in leadership roles. The germane issue in this instance is the word quality. The stark reality is that just because a police officer has worked in an area does not mean that he/she produced

quality work. When constables are promoted from an area such as the Gang and Drug unit, they should automatically be returned to the patrol function as sergeants for their first two years, so that they can impart their knowledge to others. When a detective gets promoted from a major crimes area he should automatically be returned to the patrol function as a staff sergeant for his first two years, for the same reason. In the recent past the Edmonton Police Service has promoted Gang and Drug Unit members back to Gang and Drug Unit and major crimes detectives back to major crimes as staff sergeants. This “boomerang” style promotion process that returns people to their respective areas may strengthen that area, however it weakens the service. The process of returning promotions to the front line not only strengthens the organization's ability to run a successful apprenticeship program, it strengthens the members in the service by making well-rounded police officers as they move through the ranks.

I cannot stress enough the importance of this first phase of the blueprint. The entire concept that policing is a tradecraft requiring ongoing on-the-job learning requires people that can provide the on-the-job learning through mentorship. Promoting people to areas and allowing empires to be built in certain units within the different policing bureaus is short-sighted. It is not hard to understand why inspectors and superintendents want to have familiar individuals they trust and have confidence in working for them, but this is not in the best interest of creating a police service that has quality investigators throughout.

The second phase in the blueprint for excellence in investigations is training. Traditionally, training for police officers is week-long in-house courses, or an out-of-town learning opportunity allowing a select few to receive this coveted skill or knowledge. It is incumbent upon all members in the organization to train its investigators. When the service returns investigative promotions back to the front line, these individuals can provide short training opportunities on parade and mentorship in the field. These opportunities can be 10–15 minutes long and can have a huge impact. A short Power-Point presentation on an item such as sworn statements could vastly improve the quality of patrol constables' investigations. The inception of units such as IMAC allow the street sergeants and staff sergeants far more time to be where they need to be, and that is on the street at calls offering investigative mentorship to front-line patrol officers.

The Edmonton Police Service management team needs to become more engaged in the training of its members. Commencing in 2013, West Division has led the way by embarking on a monthly training schedule providing one- to three-hour training sessions that familiarize and educate patrol members with topical and vital investigatively oriented learning opportunities. These sessions are made up of a Subject Matter Expert coming to facilitate an interactive learning session with patrol members. These skills symposiums are opportunities for junior members to learn something new from an expert, or senior members to get a refresher and an up-to-date understanding of pertinent investigative issues and methods.

Training has to be considered a priority. Patrol members who are scheduled to be on a course are often getting called back due to staffing shortages in a squad to ensure no overtime is incurred by the division. The reluctance or refusal to call in overtime for training is unacceptable. Not only does it lessen the few opportunities the front line membership has for training, it tells the front line that management does not believe training is that important.

The training budgets for patrol divisions also have to be increased. The limited funds patrol divisions have make it very difficult to provide adequate training to the 190 members in the division. When management talks of the importance of training and does not adequately fund it, it sends a message to the front-line members that management is not committed to their training needs.

Training sessions are a start to improving upon the investigative skills of front-line members. The third phase in this process is opportunity. There are several investigative areas within the Edmonton Police Service. These investigative areas utilize the Major Case Management model of policing. The Major Case Management model utilizes an investigative triangle made up of the Primary Investigator, File Coordinator, and Team Commander. There are offshoots of the triangle as well, one of these being the sworn member responsible for authoring all search warrants and affidavits known as the Affiant. The Affiant role on an investigative team is an excellent opportunity for front-line workers to be exposed to and engaged in high-level investigations. If areas such as homicide, robbery, sexual assault, and domestic offenders provided one spot per investigative team to a frontline member for one year, the developmental opportunities would be amazing. Compounding the benefit is a ripple effect when these individuals bring these strong investigative competencies back to their patrol squads after being immersed Page 55in the investigative tradecraft full time for one year. When a member gets this type of a learning experience, the results upon return will be readily applicable and measurable as that individual will become a go-to person for warrants and investigation within a squad or division.

An introductory step is to identify several areas which would offer investigative mentorship by allowing members to spend two to three weeks on loan to investigative areas immersed in an investigative culture. This introduction to full time investigating would be an excellent way for members to get on-the-job learning.

The other issue as far as opportunities go is ensuring these opportunities are equal. Oftentimes a constable will be in a street team in a division and continually have his or her tenure extended beyond the agreed-upon time in the team. It is understandable that the project team sergeants want to keep these individuals as long as they can, but it is inappropriate. The return of a project team member to patrol provides patrol with a person who can lead by example and be a go-to person providing mentorship. The adherence to the policies of tenure allows more members to experience investigations at a higher level, thereby making more mentors. The vacancies that are created by allowing patrol members to be in these teams for specific times result in more members having the opportunity to gain the knowledge in the unit.

The fourth and final phase is the simplest one, knowing who your subject matter experts are and utilizing them. This is a seemingly simple way to get the proper information, but often leaders do not want to admit that they do not know something. When leaders purport to have all knowledge on all things, they often give poor advice to a member. If this poor advice is followed it may filter through many people, becoming the gospel. This is a dangerous and irresponsible practice, and divisional management needs to impress on all ranks that they need to ensure proper advice is being sought through the subject matter experts. There is no room for conceit or ego in helping the Edmonton Police Service to become an investigative leader in policing.

The reintegration of investigative abilities is going to be a long process. It took years to filter the investigative tutelage out of the front line, and it will take years to bring it back. There has to be a shift in the culture to show that front-line policing is the place to be, and our goal should not always be to get out of patrol and into a specialized area. By returning solid investigators back to patrol in leadership functions, offering training opportunities, and ensuring that tenure in specialized areas is adhered to, we will enable members with valuable skills to go back to patrol and teach what they know. The public expects police to investigate crimes, not just report on them. Leadership is important, but the proper leadership is invaluable. We can have our sergeants on parades be motivational speakers all we want, but we need then to motivate the membership in the proper direction. The direction is investigative leadership; the message needs to be not call as fast as we can but rather investigation to investigation as thoroughly as we can. Customer service is not about how fast we arrive, it is about bringing offenders to justice, about excellent investigations, about making the victim feel like we are taking their violation as seriously as they are.

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