When the View of Change is Myopic

By

Richard C. Lumb, Ph.D.
The State University of New York at Brockport, Emeritus

I have given considerable thought to the process of change, how to get people to engage, to do things differently, to commit and to stick with it. These changes apply to teaching, organizations, family and other applications. The attached study by the National Institute of Justice (referenced below), while unique to a particular program, applies conceptually to different issues we encounter on a smaller scale. As thoughtful people, widening how we think seems important somehow.

https://www.crimesolutions.gov/ProgramDetails.aspx?ID=414&utm_source=email-govdelivery&utm_medium=eblast&utm_campaign=program414-moving

The belief by some is that providing a "step up" to people will change them. Seldom have I found that giving without mutual commitment, a means to change with equal or corresponding effort and commitment, results are as anticipated. We do not respect that which we have no investment in or internal need to protect it; the eventual loss is an ordinary course that somehow fills anticipated philosophy and expectation. What does this tell us?

Other than the obvious, people have to initiate or commit to an idea and then figure out how to achieve it, Yes, that involves others, but unless the core drive, the motivation to see it through initiates from within, a half-baked or less commitment follows. Not diminishing the need to bring people up, but it must include a patience process with steps, a commitment by the individual who realizes gains and ultimately a goal that is part of the person's experience and hard work. Is that not true with most aspects of life?

The Charlotte-Mecklenburg Police Department, a merger of Mecklenburg County Police and the City of Charlotte Police Department, found it grounded in the traditional model of law enforcement. Bringing in Chief Dennis Nowicki resulted in the implementation of community problem-oriented policing (CPOP), a substantial change in both philosophy and practice. It was a five-year conversion to include the education and training of police, residents, elected and appointed officials and an active assembly of stakeholders whose engagement was critical.

Skeptics were in the majority at first read. As time progressed and department and city-wide knowledge increased, as programs rolled out, as police officers and citizens from neighborhoods sat and talked (and listened) to one another, change happened. New

people were brought in, and my direct experience with five bright, young and motivated Geographic Information System Analysts was to change my thinking as well. Technology, smart policing, engaged stakeholders and residents, innovative ideas explored and implemented when found substantial, and importantly committed and focused people are making appropriate change efforts successful, was the key.

I would note that the Charlotte-Mecklenburg Police Department conversion to a Community Problem Oriented Policing program, was an early full partnership between a police department and a university, the University of North Carolina at Charlotte and the Department of Criminal Justice. Not common during the middle 1990s.

The process included many individual requirements that focused on reasons why the change was needed, individual and group motivation, how different groups can find a middle ground and make positive change occur, and to convert pessimistic thinking to a more optimistic approach, led to success. Not just by chance, it was a conceptual model that provided many helpful programs and with equal partnership by the city government, public and private stakeholders, and individuals. It worked superbly well at that time, those many years ago.

Controlling crime and criminals using punishment only works while the individual is incarcerated. The present and continuing "War on Drugs" is a failure of significant costs to taxpayers. Not to mention the many other variables that go to loss of wages, health, crime, misery, and other things that make the "using individual" a non-contributor to society, equates to social costs for things they (citizens) do not control. That same concept applied to crime is to question responsibility for reduction is limited only to the courts, corrections or enforcement perspective. One side creates all manner of program and rule to control the other factions (at considerable cost), but many simply ignore the divide for their view and vision is different. Seems foolish somehow!

Moreover, in our business; social, fraternal and organizational lethargy exists. The dilemma in determining solutions is unanswered questions and challenging solutions. This situation presents a unique challenge at times.

The Charlotte-Mecklenburg Experience.

Community change is difficult as the differences of opinion, situations that people live in, the influences on their life and a host of other variables work to slow the process, create diversions and present numerous issues requiring a solution. One central focus for change to a massive project, such as community problem-oriented policing, begins with acceptance and willing participation of the patrol officer. He or she is the foundation of the program, and it begins there and grows to include the entire community over a period.

The following information relates to the Charlotte-Mecklenburg Police Department and the residents of the City of Charlotte with the implementation of community problem-oriented policing. This focus is on the officers who gained the respect and confidence of the public and members of the police department in making this concept viable.

The individual officer's attitude toward his job and community is critical. Certain personality characteristics have been tied to police job performance and efficiency. Beginning with Diehl and his colleagues in 1933, police officers that were ranked as efficient and effective by their supervisors were usually those that were emotionally stable, self-sufficient, extroverted, and dominate in face-to-face situations. Hogan and Curtness (1975) using the California Psychological Inventory found that their sample of American police was masculine, self-confident, and socially effective. "Good police" were characterized by what they referred to as useful intelligence, achievement motivation, and social poise. They were more assertive, had a more clear sense of self-worth and acceptance, and were more efficient in social functioning than officers who performed less well. George Pugh (1985) using the California Psychological Inventory found that the predictability of police work to personality variables changes over time.

At two years into the study, the capacity for status was a predictor of high performance. After four and a half years, however, the best predictors were those that indicated a stable, responsible, and socially skilled individual. Pugh interpreted this to mean that during the earlier phases of police work the main focus of the job involved becoming a part of the police department and gaining the trust of other officers. As the new officer stabilizes in his/her position the traditional work of police becomes focal, rather than simply fitting into the police department, and maturity and responsibility become more critical to job performance.

The Sixteen Personality Factor Questionnaire (16PF) has also been used to identify reliable predictors of successful police performance. Fabricatore, et al., (1978) found that tough-mindedness and aggressiveness were consistent predictors of superior police performance. He and his colleagues interpreted this to support the suggestion of the homogeneity of police personality. In 1984, Richard Lawrence using the Sixteen Personality Factor Questionnaire found that being reserved, detached, critical, conscientious, persistent, practical, down to earth, socially aware, self-sufficient, resourceful, and preferring one's decisions assisted officers in his study to cope with job demands and stress. However, in Charlotte, many of these same traits were at work to help collaboration, experimentation, reaching out to the community and a willingness to give the concept the opportunity to work.

The studies reviewed were conducted during the professional era of policing. Practices developed during the professional era attempted to control crime through:

(1) Patrolling communities to detect crimes in progress and to promote general deterrence,

(2) Rapid response to calls for services, and,

(3) Investigation of crimes already committed to apprehend subjects and build evidence to be used for prosecution (Alpert and Moore, 1993).

Most of these endeavors had strong reactive themes. The effectiveness of these reactive tactics has been widely discussed in the literature on policing (Bayley, 1994; Kelling et

al., 1974; Sherman, 1995). Many of these studies suggest that there is a severe limitation on what police can do about crime in a reactive mode of operation. To many, particularly the public, it becomes apparent that old ways had not worked and that there was a need for a new approach. Community problem-oriented policing, a relatively new concept, represented this new way and its success rested on the shoulders of every member of the police department and citizens of the city.

Across the country, police chiefs, politicians, and the public alike accepted community policing. The shift from reactive policing in the professional model to pro-active policing by the community-policing model is nothing less than a revolution. Police now engage in the following programs:

(1) community crime prevention programs enhancing citizen awareness about what can be done to reduce the incident of crime (Goldstein, 1978; Rosenbaum, 1986),

(2) pro-active patrols and the monitoring of high-risk persons and places (Sherman, 1995), and,

(3) problem-solving strategies designed to intervene in situations that appear to generate crime and disorder (Bayley, 1994), and (4) community outreach and fear reduction programs to increase citizen quality of life (Moore, 1992).

The CPOP project is about developing partnerships with the community to solve problems, reduce and prevent crime, and improve the quality of life of citizens. The philosophy was also about organizational change, increased public accountability, decentralized command, and empowerment of line officers. Coupled with this is the full use of technology to support efforts, improved citizen access to crime trends and statistics, and reorientation of police activities from reaction to prevention (Brann, 1996; Seagrave, 1996; Vaughn, 1991).

Summary

Community problem-oriented policing focuses on the development of a partnership between police and community, the establishment of a problem-solving approach to crime and fear issues and attempts to increase public accountability, decentralized command, and empowerment to the individual line officer. It re-orients police activities from reaction to pro-action and prevention. Changing the police organization and its employees was based on planning and a model of change, to guide achievement of the mission and goals of the project (Prochaska and DiClemente, 1986). Understanding and to consider individual officer openness to change helped in the design of a more effective training program. It also increased the likelihood that officers, especially senior level officers, bought in and supported the program.

References:

Alpert, G. and Moore, M. (1993). Measuring police performance in the new paradigm of policing. In: DiLulio, J.J. (ed.) Performance Measures for the Criminal Justice System. Bureau of Justice Statistics, Princeton University.

Bayley, D. H. (1994). Police for the Future. New York, N.Y.: Oxford University Press.

Brann, J. (1996, spring). "COPS director Joe Brann welcomes new community policing publication for Sheriffs." Sheriff times, 1.

Diehl, H., Paterson, D., Dvorak, B. and Logstaff, H. (1933). A personnel study of Duluth policemen. Bulletin, Employment Stabilization Research Institute, University of Minnesota, 2(2), 24.

Fabricatore, J., Azen, S., Schoentgen, S. and Snibbe, H. (1978). Predicting performance of police officers using the sixteen personality factor questionnaire. American Journal of Community Psychology, 6(1), 63–70.

Goldstein, H. (1978). Police policy formulation: a proposal for improving police performance. In: Gaines, L. and Ricks, T. (eds) Managing the Police Organization. West Publishing, St Paul, MN.

Hogan, R. and Kurtiness, W. (1975). Personological correlates of police effectiveness. Journal of Psychology, 91(2), 289–295.

Kelling, G., Pate, A., Dieckman, D. and Brown, C. (1974). The Kansas City Preventive Patrol Experiment: Technical Report. Police Foundation, Washington, DC.

Moore, M. (1992). Problem-solving and community policing. In: Tonry, M. and Morris, N. (eds), Criminal Justice: A Review of Research, Vol. 15, pp. 99–157. University of Chicago Press, Chicago.

Prochaska, J.O., and DiClemente, C. C. (1986). Toward a comprehensive model of change. In R. Miller and N. Heather (eds.). Treating Addictive Behaviors: Processes of Change, (pp.3-27). New York: Plenum Press.

Pugh, G. (1985). The California Psychological Inventory and police selection. Journal of Police Science and Administration, 13(2), 172–177.

Sherman, L. and Weisbund, D. (1995). General deterrent effects of police patrol in crime "hot spots": a randomized controlled trial, Justice Quarterly, 12(4), 625–648.

Rosenbaum, D. (ed.) (1986). Community Crime Prevention: Does It Work? Sage, Beverly Hills, CA.

Seagrave, J. (1996). Defining community policing. American Journal of Police. XV (1), 1-22.

Vaughn, J. r. (1991, June). Community oriented policing . . . You can make it happen. Law and Order, 35-39.