Life Inside a Police Organization

The police organization is a conglomerate of many individuals and groups that cooperate in varying degrees in their attempts to accomplish a variety of complex and often ill-defined tasks.

- How well the police agency functions depends upon how well police officers contend with the many influences both from inside and outside the organization that impact employee performance.

The Formal Organization

- Police organizations remained quiet side, military hierarchies.
- The reason for the endurance of the quasi-military structure is added facilities: communication, coordination, and control, all of which are vital to the success of the police mission (see Figure 6.1).
Communications and Accountability

- The most vital skill of an effective officer, leader, and/or supervisor is communication.
- To be successful, officers must be able to clearly articulate their decisions and the responses expected from others.

They must also ensure their interpretations of communications from superiors, peers, subordinates, and others from both inside and outside the police agency are accurate.
- To the police bureaucracy, attempts to ensure that managers are not bypassed by establishing a chain of command and formal communications.

The chain of command should be a responsive communication network that channels information and ideas in both directions and facilitates feedback.
- If there is no means of verifying accountability for actions taken, then goals and objectives will not be met.
Structure

- The traditional police hierarchy is a pyramid-type structure comprised of those components deemed necessary to achieve the agency’s mission.
- In a small police agency, two or three components may address all the duties for which the organization is responsible.
- The tasks assigned and the lines of authority necessary to ensure coordination of efforts and compliance with regulations determine how the organization is divided.

Operations

- The most important operations unit is the patrol unit.
- Patrol is charged with providing the first response to virtually all calls for police service.
- It is the only unit, within the typical police agency responsible for all three functions of policing:
  - Crime control;
  - Order maintenance; and
  - Service delivery.

Administration

- Administration is the nerve center that ensures that operational personnel are able to perform their tasks adequately.
- Administration is responsible for the process by which police personnel are selected, trained, advised, regulated, evaluated, transferred, promoted, demoted, disciplined, rewarded, compensated, and terminated.
Auxiliary Services

- Auxiliary services are essential in order to provide police services to the public.
- The most important auxiliary service is communications.
- Other auxiliary units indicated in Table 6.1 are also required for the success of operations personnel and the accomplishment of the organizational mission.

Informal Organization

- Informal communication networks exist; they often circumvent the organization’s formal structure.
- Although official business is conducted by the formal organization, the informal organization often determines which decisions will be made and the manner in which these decisions will be carried out.
- The informal organization plays an important role in ensuring that things get done when the formal structure or individuals within it are found to be lacking.

Managing Change

- Change is an inevitable manifestation of organizational life.
- Change is vital to the positive growth of a law enforcement policy.
- Efforts to implement changes within the police organization that do not take into account the interaction of various workgroups will probably only produce short-term benefits.
The key to managing change is understanding the following:
- Why change must occur.
- What the effects of the proposed change might be.
- How the change is to occur.

Dealing with Superiors
- Management styles of police executives vary considerably due to the work assignments, experience, education, training, individual personality, and the policy requirements of the agency or its supervisors.
- The key to understanding each style is how the police leader orients themselves to the internal and external communities.

Immediate Superiors
- Successful officers must establish a working rapport with their immediate superiors despite any differences in personal perspectives and/or administrative philosophies.
- Most disagreements with superiors can be mitigated through understanding and compromise. When there are disputes that are not readily reconciled, officers must remember their responsibility to the agency, their colleagues, and to themselves.
Dealing with Subordinates

- The authors have adapted a variety of different employee types that superiors must deal with:
  - Rookies (competency issues)
  - Workers (minimal monitoring)
  - Stars (great worker, ego issues)
  - Cynics (wronged employee)
  - Retirees (marginal employee)
  - Depleted (burned out employee)

Dealing with Peers

- In dealing with peers there are three types that should be considered:
  - Allies: people who will assist when needed
  - Adversaries: suspicious of the motivations
  - Neutrals: no previous good or bad contact

Interrelationships

- One of the quickest means of alienating employees is to claim credit for their accomplishments.
- Sharing glory for successful accomplishment is not only the right thing to do, it is also the smart thing to do.
Despite the best intentions and efforts, things occasionally go wrong. When this occurs in a bureaucracy, there is often a tendency to roll the blame as far down the organizational structure as possible.

A good officer will not only be quick to identify and correct improper performance, but will also be willing to accept responsibility for his/her own failures.