

POLICE CHIEF 101

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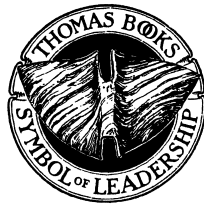
POLICE CHIEF 101

**Practical Advice for the
Law Enforcement Leader**

By

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Greeley, Colorado*



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*To
Kathy*

PREFACE

There is not a job in the world like being the police chief. The chief must be part personnel manager, part politician, and wholly a role model for the people he leads. While being many things to many people, first and foremost the chief must never forget what it is like to be a cop. As any veteran chief will attest, the highs of the job can be truly exhilarating; the lows deep enough to send the unwary into deep depression.

This book will serve the new, veteran or wannabe chief equally well. Authored by a police chief with 40 years of law enforcement experience, it provides practical, common sense advice for doing the multitude of jobs the chief faces with effectiveness and efficiency. It furnishes sound advice intended to help the chief retain his physical, emotional and ethical health while leading a professional law enforcement agency. This volume accomplishes all of this at a time when too many appear to have lost their moral compass, or their ability to be effective as leaders.

While written especially for the CEOs of small- to medium-sized law enforcement agencies, the book will prove very useful to the leader of any law enforcement organization as well as those in the top ranks who aspire to head the agency one day. Its advice is just as relevant for the state police superintendent or county sheriff as it is for the chief of police in a city of 90,000. The author is well aware that the challenges faced by all of these professionals are similar. He also recognizes that the solutions to their problems are often similar, as well.

The author calls upon the experiences of many veteran law enforcement leaders in identifying common problems and offering practical solutions. This experience-based knowledge often comes from lessons learned the hard way by real people facing real tests and challenges. The author's intent is that readers can benefit from the trials of others in order to avoid previous mistakes and build on the body of knowledge that constitutes professional law enforcement leadership.

Chapter One offers the new or relatively new chief advice on taking control of his new department and putting his agenda in place. Even long-term

chiefs can take advantage of the chapter's points to ascertain that they have done everything necessary to establish control and direction of their agency. Chapters Two and Three provide solid advice for leading a great law enforcement organization and emphasize the extreme importance of role modeling the behavior that the leader expects of his people. The "little things" that a successful leader does are featured as prominently as the major accomplishments of the effective CEO.

Chapter Four sets out the requirements for a productive relationship with the chief's top staff. It also delves into what is required to bolster a weak staff and further strengthen a solid one. Chapter Five and Six explore the multifaceted relationship a chief has with his employees. They delve into what is needed to keep those relations as positive as possible through good times and bad. They also cover thoroughly the law enforcement chief executive's responsibilities to his people.

Chapter Seven provides the chief with some guidelines for managing his relations with the various factions that make up the community, while the following chapter discusses one of the toughest mandates of all: getting along with the boss. One veteran law enforcement leader put it succinctly. "It's all about how you accomplish your personal and organizational goals without getting fired." The experiences—good and bad—of a lot of law enforcement leaders have been tapped for this key chapter.

Chapter Nine explores discipline in its various facts and emphasizes the chief's role in this vital process. Sound advice is proffered to help the police boss make the really tough calls when much is on the line. Next, Chapter Ten contains help for deciding on a course of action when things go wrong, as inevitably they will. The death of a police officer, officer-involved shootings, major misconduct within the department and "bad press" are among the organizational disasters discussed here. Organizational recovery from each must be the chief's ultimate goal, and the book presents sound advice for accomplishing just that.

Few chiefs have long survived by maintaining a hostile relationship with the news media. Chapter Eleven is targeted on helping the law enforcement leader maintain a good working relationship with the ladies and gentlemen of the press without giving away his soul or damaging his organization in the process. The chapter contains time-proven techniques for helping the chief keep his department's best foot forward in the eyes of the media. But it also tells him how to respond effectively when the news is not so positive.

The importance of personal ethics in the chief's personal and professional life is the focus of Chapter Twelve. The necessity of a periodic, ethical self-exam is noted. The chapter offers a simple conclusion: the chief must never abandon his personal integrity for political expediency or even job survival. Meanwhile, Chapter Thirteen summarizes the real-world experiences of suc-

cessful law enforcement bosses in navigating the political minefields of the job. This discussion makes it obvious that while the chief should not be a shameless politician, neither can he be unknowledgeable about the power of politics.

The chief will find potentially life-saving advice in Chapter Fourteen. This section of the book offers common sense guidelines for staying emotionally, mentally and physically healthy in what could otherwise be a killing job. Finally, Chapter Fifteen attempts to help the chief decide for himself when it is time to leave the position and perhaps the profession. It also reminds him that there is life—and the potential for a very good life—after being the boss.

A couple of final notes: the text regularly refers to the chief in the male gender. This is for ease of reading only, as women have long since proven themselves equal to their male counterparts as effective leaders. Also, on occasion the reader will encounter repetition of points made previously in the text. This is not accidental; some key principles apply in more than one area of discussion and merit the emphasis of repetition. They are that important.

In the final analysis, the world does not have nearly enough truly effective law enforcement leaders. This book is targeted on vastly increasing the number. With that goal set, it is time to get on with its fulfillment.

G.W.G.

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POLICE CHIEF 101

Chapter 1

WHEN YOU'RE THE NEW CHIEF

Even if he or she had been a law enforcement chief executive before, most experienced chiefs will acknowledge the day they took the reins of their department was not one they will soon forget. For the novice chief taking on his first CEO position, the memories are even more intense years down the road. The truth is that there is not another job on earth exactly like leading a law enforcement agency in the twenty-first century. The demands are great, the challenges and frustrations are many. Yet for the man or woman who went into law enforcement “to help people,” the opportunities to do just that are legion.

Every law enforcement “Big Boss” was once a rookie chief and has experienced at least some of the doubts and concerns that you, the new chief, are feeling today. At one time or another, most doubted that they had made the right choice. Most were unsure at some point if they really could do the job, or still wanted to. The good news for you is that most of these good people found that they did indeed want to lead the personnel behind them. They did so successfully, each in his or her way.

It is true that every law enforcement leader, like every human being, is just a little different from everyone else and from every other leader. It is a good thing that leadership allows for differences in style and personality. There is not one and only one way to do the job correctly.

The budding police chief does not have to be a clone of anyone else. At the same time, however, experience has taught that there are personal traits and practices that help one leader to be stronger or more effective than another. There are things which can be taught and learned that will make *you* a better law enforcement chief executive. Those things are what this book is about. Assembled from the experiences of a great many leaders over a great many years, this common sense advice will serve to make the attentive reader better at doing his difficult job.

Although targeted on the new or wannabe chief at a medium-sized police

agency, the volume's advice will prove helpful to you if you are a veteran chief or upper management law enforcement leader in a big city or small town. Effective leadership skills work as well in a rural sheriff's office as they do in a big, metropolitan police department.

The truth is that law enforcement can never have too many very effective leaders. It is time to get on with the task of creating more.

DO YOUR HOMEWORK BEFORE YOU START

As a law enforcement manager you already know how to do research. As an investigator you likewise know how to gather information from diverse sources. You will need to utilize those skills as the newly-appointed leader of a law enforcement organization.

No doubt you assembled a lot of data in preparing to compete for the chief's position. You already should know a great deal about the perceived strengths and weaknesses of the organization, at least as seen through the eyes of the reporters, editorial writers, bloggers and letter authors whose views you have examined via the local media. Perhaps you have talked to members of the department and residents of the community as an important part of your information-gathering efforts. If you have not done so already, now would be a good time to organize and review what you have learned from these sources. In examining what you have recorded, watch for consistent themes that may tell you work is needed in specific areas: leadership, policies and procedures, integrity and so on.

Now that you are officially the new chief, you will be able to gain even more information from sources you likely did not reach when you were a contestant for the job. The list of people you might talk with is practically endless, but there are a number of people you certainly will want to contact. If your appointing authority has no objection, it would be helpful to sit down with each of your council or board members and get their insights on the department's strengths and weaknesses. You are there to listen to them talk. This is not the time to make big pronouncements or promises. Stay alert for any consistent, major issues that the speakers bring up. Do not be surprised if their opinions of what is important vary widely. If anyone has an ax to grind with the department or its former leader, the complaint is likely to surface at this time. Listen carefully and do not be too quick to respond. Realize that you may be getting incomplete or even inaccurate information in the mix of opinions.

Take your leadership staff's opinions on the organization, its problems, its strong points and its weak areas. Have your staff put their views in writing. Not only will you gain insight on how well they grasp what is going on in the

agency, you will see how well they communicate with the written word.

You will want to collect the opinions of your mid-managers and supervisors, both cops and civilians, early in your tenure. Sit down with the leaders of any unions or other employee associations in the agency. Again, you are there to listen and take notes, not argue or make promises. You are still in the information-gathering stage; the formulation of action plans and responses can come a bit later.

Your fellow department heads also may be able to help you by sharing their observations on your organization and your boss. Law enforcement officials such as the district attorney and the sheriff should be able to provide their own insights on your agency and its reputation in the community. Other community leaders should be willing to contribute their observations, as well.

Take sufficient notes about what you learn. There is a lot of information out there, but realize that you are only human and will have neither the time nor the energy to get it all. Do the best you can. Know that this is a very busy time for you and your many other responsibilities will preclude you from listening to every soul in the community who has something to say.

Don't forget that you can learn a lot from your agency's own documents, too. Look at the most important sections of your department's rules, policies and procedures. You are seeking to educate yourself, but you also are looking for weak spots that need shored up immediately. Ethics, evidence handling, officer safety and use of force guidelines top the list of subjects that merit your close scrutiny.

Doing your homework now could save you a lot of frustration later. It will enable you to make good decisions as you begin to put your stamp on your organization.

KNOW WHY YOU WERE CHOSEN

An important part of the homework to be done by a newly-appointed chief is finding out why he was chosen over the competition. In some cases, the reason may be relatively obvious. Hopefully, you have been keeping up with the jurisdiction's news media in the months preceding the selection process. If not, review past stories on the department now. You should know, for instance, if there has been bad press about corruption, lack of leadership or poor customer service in the department. You should know if the last chief is departing because of a scandal or other personal ethics lapse. You should know if the vacancy was created by an evidence-handling or minority relations disaster. Whatever the case, it will be your job to demonstrate quickly that you know how to fix the problem and will do so as rapidly as possible.