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National Institute of Justice

Research in Action

James K. Stewart, Director

August 1989

Operation Bootstrap: Opening Corporate Classrooms to Police Managers

by Bill Bruns

U.S. businesses spend over \$30 billion a year to provide about 17 million formal training and career advancement courses for their employees, according to recent estimates. This investment demonstrates the belief that what is taught in corporate classrooms can sharpen management skills and thus increase a company's competitive edge.

This same investment can also be a resource for the public sector. An infusion of high-quality corporate training into law enforcement agencies, for example, could help those agencies upgrade management skills to better address the increasingly complex and ever-changing demands society places on public safety professionals.

In fact, such a program already exists. Operation Bootstrap, begun in 1985, is an educational clearinghouse that provides tuition-free corporate management training programs to a cross-section of police administrators and officers across the country.

Launched as a pilot program of the International Association of Chiefs of Police (IACP), Operation Bootstrap now reaches into 40 States with support from

Bill Bruns, currently West Coast bureau chief for *TV Guide*, is a former freelance writer and *Life* magazine editor.

private foundations and the National Institute of Justice. It offers state-of-the-art management training and self-help programs that range in length from 1 day to 1 week and cover subjects such as effective supervision, conflict resolution, group problem solving, and stress management.

About 70 corporations donated over 800 seats in their executive education programs in 1988, absorbing tuition costs for law enforcement personnel and leaving participants responsible only for travel and per diem expenses through their departments. At an average cost of \$600 a course, corporations are donating approximately \$500,000 to the law enforcement sector this year.

"Highly skilled corporate management is one of our Nation's greatest resources," said James K. Stewart, Director of the National Institute of Justice. As the police profession evolves to meet new demands and attracts growing numbers of college-educated officers, training in management skills and techniques and executive development is a critical need.

"At the same time, police training budgets are stretched just to meet the demand for basic and in-service law enforcement training," he added. "Operation Bootstrap offers an innova-

tive way for police to maximize their training resources and give law enforcement managers access to a wide range of topical material and specialized instructors.

"Taxpayers invest over \$14 billion per year in public law enforcement," said Mr. Stewart. "They have every right to expect that these costly assets will be expertly managed in their public safety interests."

This *Research in Action*, based upon on-site interviews at Operation Bootstrap headquarters at the University of Washington in Seattle, is an analysis of evaluations of training sessions written by participating law enforcement personnel and discussions with corporate training directors. It reviews the program's history, how it functions, and where it is headed.

The origins of Operation Bootstrap

In 1980, Mike Shanahan, Chief of the University of Washington Police Department, organized the Washington Law Enforcement Executive Forum, which brought together leaders from public and private sectors to see what they could do—collectively—to address their related needs in an ongoing fashion. This led, among other things,

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to a "loaned executive" program, in which corporations would donate their own people as management consultants to law enforcement agencies. It also led to Shanahan's discovery that Seattle's Boeing Company was inviting selected middle managers from the King County Department of Public Safety to attend its 4-day program, "Managing for Excellence," and waiving the tuition cost—"a good idea that I tucked away," he said.

Meanwhile, he was learning that other police chiefs shared his concern that law enforcement's management training efforts needed a major boost. The National Institute of Justice encouraged Chief Shanahan to "test market" a program he dubbed Operation Bootstrap. Reaching back to the concept of "bootstrap" programs that helped soldiers get through college, Shanahan wanted to convey the idea that a law enforcement professional was being given an opportunity, through

The Founder of Operation Bootstrap

Michael G. Shanahan, 48, has been chief of the University of Washington police department since 1971. He commands 58 officers, policing a campus that has a daytime population of about 50,000.

After graduating from Stanford University as a psychology major in 1962, Shanahan served as a major in the U.S. Army.

Shanahan has served as president of the Washington Association of Sheriffs and Police Chiefs and general chairman of the IACP Division of State Associations of Chiefs of Police (SACOP). He currently cochairs the IACP Private Sector Liaison Committee and is chairman of the National Law Enforcement Exploring Committee of the Boy Scouts.

corporate education programs, to enhance his or her own career while helping to improve the department's operations.

Writing on behalf of the State Associations of Chiefs of Police (SACOP), Shanahan sent letters to CEO's at dozens of Fortune 500 companies. Instead of requesting cash contributions, he asked for classroom seats in executive training programs, on any management subject that would have relevance for law enforcement administrators. General Telephone of California was the first company to come on board, followed by Burroughs (now Unisys), AT&T, Citibank, Hartford Insurance, and Xerox. Boeing greatly expanded its existing program.

Despite positive feedback from participants and corporate training directors, Operation Bootstrap remained largely a grassroots volunteer effort for about 2 years. The breakthrough opportunity finally arrived in mid-1987 with a \$7,000 grant from the National Institute of Justice that allowed a part-time director to be hired.

The new director, Hank Sitko, had extensive corporate experience, and he worked directly with corporate training directors to reach out to the management of Fortune 500 companies. In 1988 dozens of corporations began committing hundreds of courses to the program and Sitko found he had to get on the phone to line up law enforcement personnel all across the country to fill them. But funds were limited. Another NIJ grant of \$20,000, combined with sustained new funding by the Medina Foundation of Seattle, Washington, helped assure the program's survival into 1989.

How Operation Bootstrap works

The program is designed to minimize red tape for participating corporations as well as for law enforcement officials. Once a corporation's course offerings have been received, Sitko contacts a variety of policing officials in nearby jurisdictions (for example, police departments and sheriffs' offices, State highway patrols, local training academies). These officials are responsible for assigning people to courses—without interference from Operation Bootstrap.

The corporate training director then receives one piece of paper from Operation Bootstrap saying who will be enrolled in what classes and who to contact in case of a problem.

Several other operating policies and procedures help ensure a professional program.

1. Program rules ask that chiefs and training directors recruit "upwardly mobile" personnel who genuinely want to attend, who see the training course as an opportunity to improve personal skills and professionalism, as well as their department's operational effectiveness. (At present, the program is not integrated with any formal career advancement requirements or procedures in participating agencies.)
2. Participants—and their needs—are closely matched to the course.
3. The program avoids sending more than one participant to the same course, to encourage development of personal contacts between the participating officer and business people—contacts that can be nurtured beyond the course.

4. Corporate training directors are asked to alert their instructors that Bootstrap participants are in attendance. Forewarned, the instructor can make them feel at home among the corporate attendees.

What law enforcement gains from the corporate classroom

Now that Operation Bootstrap has grown into a nationwide program, how successful is it in achieving its major goals—(1) to sharpen the managerial skills of law enforcement executives and (2) to improve the overall effectiveness of their respective departments back home?

The long-term impact of these educational opportunities—how well law enforcement participants actually follow through on what they have learned—has not been formally evaluated. But participant evaluation sheets and letters from a cross-section of police chiefs express strong support for the value of this training and cite numerous positive results emanating from officer involvement in corporate classrooms. For example:

1. While these outside training programs are designed for corporate managers and their role in the corporate environment, nearly every law enforcement attendee has cited the usefulness and relevance of the course instruction.

● “Management behavior is applicable to managers in any type of workplace,” said a lieutenant from the Sheriff’s Department Training Bureau in Whittier, California.

● After attending a 4-day “Managing People” course given by Unisys, a police sergeant wrote, “The manage-

ment techniques I learned are easily adaptable to a management level in law enforcement, since both areas rely on interaction between people.”

● A sergeant in the Glenview Police Department, after attending Kraft’s 4-day management development seminar, commented, “Other than stressing the profit motive, all other management principles apply to the public sector if you keep an open mind. Personnel issues have a commonality whether they occur in the private or public sector.”

2. Operation Bootstrap offers a smorgasbord of courses, some of which might appear to be of limited value to the law enforcement profession, until the breadth of responsibilities faced by these managers and supervisors are taken into account.

● For example, an AT&T course, “Presentation Techniques,” was valuable for an officer in the Longmont (Colorado) Police Bureau, who is required to make presentations to “civic groups, parents, school children, or disgruntled citizens.”

● A patrolman from Clinton Township Police Department, New Jersey, felt that Prudential’s 2-day course, “Technically Write,” is relevant to any law enforcement officer because “this profession demands clear, accurate, and well-organized written material.”

● Time management courses are also popular, reflecting the pressures on supervisors in public safety agencies with limited resources and widening responsibilities. (“Unfortunately, most officers never receive this kind of training,” noted a Michigan police lieutenant.)

● A sergeant in the Phoenix Regional Police Academy felt that General Telephone’s 3-day “Management of Change” course was relevant because his department was preparing for some major changes in work methods and the managers needed to learn how to implement those changes effectively. “Also,” he said, “I learned how I react to change and what to expect from employees who are confronted by changes.”

3. Also important are the insights law enforcement officials gain from their brief but intense encounter with the corporate world. Cornelius Behan, chief of the Baltimore County Police Department, noted that “Training such as this enables us to have supervisors who are not only more thoroughly prepared for management roles, but also have a better understanding of the private sector.”

● “I realized that business executives have many of the same concerns and problems that we do as public employees,” said a captain in the Longmont, Colorado, Police Department, after attending a 3-day AT&T course, “Measuring and Evaluating Job Performance.” “This kind of realistic perspective should help law enforcement personnel find it easier to form better working relationships with the business community.”

4. On another level, Operation Bootstrap is giving hundreds of well-positioned law enforcement personnel the opportunity to break away from their office routine and immerse themselves in education. Freed from the pressures and distractions of their job, they find themselves in a stimulating atmosphere where they are exposed to new information and challenged by corporate management concepts, techniques, and practices. Operation Bootstrap gives people a chance, especially in the longer

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seminars, to spend some quality time just thinking about new ideas and expanding their horizons a bit so that they open themselves up to positive change. Ideally, they'll gain a better perspective on the day-to-day problems they have at the office and they'll return with a method to manage themselves—and their subordinates—more effectively, according to the program.

How the community benefits

Bootstrap participants help combat any negative police stereotypes through their interaction in the classroom with business executives. "Corporate people realize we police officers are people too," commented one Connecticut commander. He added, "They discover we have the same management problems as they have." Moreover, business leaders appear gratified to find so many law enforcement personnel who are interested in learning modern management techniques. Meanwhile, America's future police leaders are gaining a better understanding of the business community and its concerns about crime.

Ultimately, of course, society benefits as law enforcement executives improve their own agencies by adapting some of the techniques used successfully by business executives in reaching corporate decisions, managing personnel, and performing their own individual jobs.

"Law enforcement has become the most important 'frontline' provider of social services in our society," said Institute Director Stewart. "Police deal not just with criminals, but the homeless, the mentally ill, abused children, battered spouses, and a host of other issues that confront our citizens. Their responsibility is not only to help solve crimes but to help manage

these complex social issues. Partnerships with corporate America can help maximize our limited resources to help communities."

Operation Bootstrap's future

How much more can the program grow—given its present funding—and in what directions?

With hundreds of major corporations that can still be recruited into the program, there is considerable room for the expansion of Bootstrap. And indeed, classroom offerings keep expanding. For example, General Dynamics alone is now offering management programs in 10 States and 12 locations, while AT&T and Prudential provide over 200 courses a year. Demand is rapidly growing among law enforcement agencies as Bootstrap's reputation spreads. Police chiefs are saying, "I'll take all the courses you can give me. My people want this training."

Despite its popularity, Operation Bootstrap is approaching logistical limits that cannot be transcended without long-term funding. Projections for 1989 indicate over 1,200 managers in 42 States will attend corporate training facilitated by Operation Bootstrap. Chief Shanahan notes a "remarkable return on investment" when the relatively small amount expended to administer the program—about \$65,000 in 1988—is considered. About 80 percent of this \$65,000 operating budget in 1988 was derived from fundraising by the Private Liaison Committee of the IACP. Because of a \$20,000 grant from the Burlington Northern Foundation in Seattle, fundraising efforts for 1989 have been complemented by another \$25,000 grant from NIJ.

According to program organizers, foun-

dations are probably the most feasible source of financial support in the future—even though foundations don't normally fund law enforcement projects. "As law enforcement provides more and more social services," said Shanahan, "foundations should be more comfortable providing support through a program such as Bootstrap. After all, when police administrators manage people and their departments more effectively, a direct return accrues to the community."

Operation Bootstrap has a number of long-range goals

1. More police chiefs should be involved in high-powered, 5-day leadership courses that bring together corporate CEO's and senior management. Senior police officials can benefit from the training as well as from the corporate experience. In 1988, 12 chiefs attended Metropolitan Life's "Influence" courses.
2. Courses should include more members of smaller police departments, where management training will have an immediate impact. Chiefs of these departments may need special assistance because they are often located in areas where management development programs are not readily available and funds are extremely limited. (Eighty-five percent of the police departments in this country have fewer than 15 sworn personnel.)
3. The program should continue to foster a positive impact on State and local training academies and in-house programs through Bootstrap "graduates" who bring home raised expectations and practical suggestions for improving law enforcement training.

Commented a Connecticut police captain on his evaluation sheet, "The course taught interpersonal

skills...necessary for managers who want to communicate with people and get things done. This...could be taught at the academy to recruits and it would foster better public relations and lessen the number of complaints about police officers."

Training directors are already encouraged to attend courses themselves so that they can gain fresh insights into their own programs along with the opportunity to establish personal contact with topflight instructors and consultants who could be hired to fill specific curricular needs.

A training officer from the Battle Creek, Michigan, Police Department, who took Kelloggs' 2-day stress management course, commented, "This course would have to be modified for police patrol personnel, but the Bootstrap exposure will probably lead to the development of an ongoing inservice stress management/wellness program for our department."

4. The program encourages participating corporations to foster contacts between corporate security directors and police personnel. Operation Bootstrap also works to improve the relationship between police and private security.

5. The program will continue to work to bridge the gap between law enforcement and the private sector by creating personal relationships among upwardly mobile officers and executives. The

classroom setting encourages contacts that have a much better chance to develop into long-term relationships because they are made in a positive environment, outside the usual police service setting. The response from the corporate world attests to this. Xerox Corporation Chairman David T. Kearns notes, "We have enjoyed our association over the years with Operation Bootstrap and have been most impressed with the character of the participants. Having participants from the public sector provides our Xerox managers with a different and important perspective on management trends and issues." And Vice Chairman Mal Stamper of The Boeing Company has said, "The Boeing Company is proud to have been a charter member of Operation Bootstrap. The presence of police officials in our training program has been mutually beneficial."

"My hope is that as these people advance in their careers, they'll stay in touch and cross-communicate in terms of problems such as drugs in the workplace and corporate victimization," said Chief Shanahan.

Operation Bootstrap—a hopeful beginning

"For the 1990's, the relationship between public police and the private sector will have major influence on law enforcement management thinking and decisionmaking," Mr. Stewart pointed out. Operation Bootstrap is one small

but heartening success story as it helps to nurture this developing relationship.

"If our program can inspire changes in the training academies, if weeklong leadership seminars can improve senior management, if corporate courses can inspire sergeants, lieutenants, and captains with valuable new knowledge and motivation, then Operation Bootstrap can ultimately have a major impact on public safety across the country," said Chief Shanahan. "It will take time, and an increasing amount of commitment, but it can happen. It deserves to happen."

Corporations and law enforcement managers that wish to participate in Operation Bootstrap are encouraged to write Hank Sitko, University of Washington Police Department, 1117 N.E. Boat St., Seattle, WA 98105. The Bootstrap telephone is (206) 481-4544.

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