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Page 22



Page 25

## Features

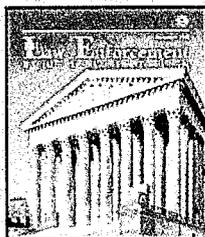
- 1 Service Quality in Policing** 139473  
By Robert Galloway and Laurie A. Fitzgerald
- 10 Federal Assistance to Law Enforcement** 139474  
By Timothy A. Capron and Rhonda A. Capron
- 15 UCR's Blueprint for the Future** 139475  
By Victoria L. Major
- 22 Video Stress Interview**  
By Mike Carey
- 25 Supreme Court Cases** 139476  
By William U. McCormack  
NCJRS

NOV 17 1992

## Departments

### ACQUISITIONS

- 7 Unusual Weapon**
- 8 Crime Data**
- 14 Bulletin Reports**
- 18 Focus on Forensics**
- 20 Point of View**
- 32 Bulletin Notes**



**On the Cover:** During the 1991-1992 term, the U.S. Supreme Court handed down several decisions of particular interest to law enforcement. See article p. 25. (Cover photo © Pete Saloutos, 1992, Tony Stone Worldwide.)

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# Service Quality in Policing

By  
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and  
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**A** litany of reasons exists as to why government agencies do not enjoy a positive reputation for providing products and services. The lack of profit motive, which takes away the incentive to do any more than is necessary, is one reason given. Others include the absence of competition, which would inspire service quality and the efficient use of resources, or the belief that government agencies deal only with citizens, not real customers.

Indeed, until recently, government did enjoy the special status of being a monopoly and operated as the only game in town. Because of this, such concepts as profit, competition, customers, quality, or even the thought of going out of business did not seem to apply. Then came the quality revolution.

Since the early 1980s, a fervor for creating superior quality in both products and services has been spreading across the United States. Every form of organization, from multinational conglomerates to mom-and-pop shops, feels pressure to respond to the demands of a more articulate, knowledgeable, and increasingly unforgiving consumer.

Even the public sector, which thought itself to be invulnerable, faces the realities of a new and demanding marketplace. More and more, government agencies recog-

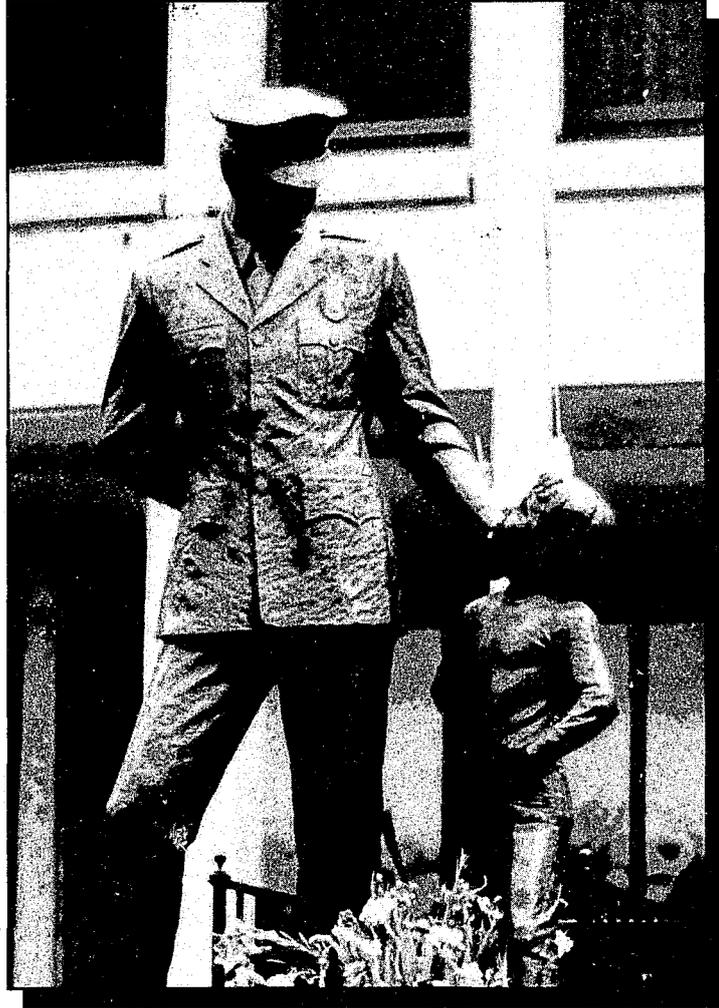


Photo by David J. Redding

nize that their constituents wield enormous power. Today, government suffers from a loss of respect and credibility, lack of financial support, and intolerance for error.

## The Move Toward Service Quality

In 1987, a Presidential mandate directed every agency in the Federal Government to look for ways to

improve the quality of products and services. Since then, several Federal agencies, including the Air Force Logistics Command and the Internal Revenue Service, have made enormous strides toward improving their operations.

State agencies, as well as those in large and small municipalities,<sup>1</sup> also contributed to the momentum for a startling transformation in how



*Chief Galloway heads the Brighton, Colorado, Police Department.*



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government conducts its business. Slowly but surely, government joined its peers in private industry in the quality service movement.

As numerous local, State, and Federal organizations moved toward quality service, law enforcement was conspicuous by its absence. To date, few, if any, examples of innovative approaches to the improvement of the quality of police services are known, and those that have taken place haven't received wide exposure. Yet, there are certain steps that police agencies can take to start the process of quality improvement in police work.

### **The Police and Service Quality**

There is little doubt that citizens' expectations of law enforcement services have changed. The public is no longer satisfied with what had been quite acceptable in the past—a modicum of protection from the criminal element in society.

Traditionally, the standard police motto "To serve and to protect"

placed emphasis on the latter duty. Today, citizens expect far more of police agencies than simply the delivery of protective services.

Although protection is clearly a "must have" for most law-abiding citizens, there are a considerable number of items on the "nice to have" list, such as professional police behavior, respectful treatment, maintenance of human dignity, responsiveness, and value added to life. In addition, not only do the increasingly sophisticated taxpayers want to be treated well, but they also insist on maximum effectiveness and efficiency in the use of police resources.

### **An Approach to Service Quality**

Most police administrators are aware of these higher-order expectations. They also recognize that if these expectations are to be met, police agencies must shift their frame of reference from social regulation and enforcing the law to the more subtle aspects of social facilitation. But what is lacking is an

effective, expedient, and practical way to bring about this shift. One vehicle that can be used to reach this desired destination is total service quality (TSQ).

TSQ represents a fundamental change in how business is done and how resources are deployed. Once implemented, its only expense is the cost of routine operations.

But TSQ is also a "profit" generator. If implemented correctly, TSQ can identify cost-saving measures early.

### **TSQ: A Strategic Tool**

TSQ is neither tactical nor programmatic. Rather, it is a strategic tool for establishing a new harmony between the intentions and operations of the police and the expectations and requirements of the public. In short, TSQ represents a new way of doing police work.

For TSQ to work, the values, roles, motivations, rewards, and intricate network of relationships that comprise law enforcement must be systematically and strategically transformed. TSQ represents a philosophy and a common set of beliefs and values designed to improve the success of a police department in satisfying the needs and expectations of the community. Furthermore, it is a system-wide determination to do everything administratively, technically, and interpersonally right the first time.

To understand total service quality, it is necessary to examine what each word represents to the overall strategy. "Total" means that each and every one of the department's members, regardless of rank, tenure, or status, is an active and willing participant in the delivery of superior quality services. It

also signifies a full commitment to customer satisfaction, which should be the top priority of the department.

The meaning of "service" in this context is customer-driven performance rather than the more common connotation of servitude. Karl Albrecht and Ron Zemke, experts in the art of science and service management, suggest that there are several "special realities" of service to consider in order to serve customers correctly.<sup>2</sup> Some of the more pertinent realities are found in table 1.

"Quality" is recognized as the antithesis of waste and errors, which places the greatest drain on police resources. Statisticians estimate that in the public sector, 30-45% of every budget dollar is virtually thrown away.<sup>3</sup> However, when a department enlists everyone in the war on waste, when everyone commits 100% of their efforts to error-free performance, monies otherwise expended on operational inefficiencies, internal investigations, and grievances and complaints, to name just a few examples, are freed up for use elsewhere. This equates to profit. Although public service agencies do not traditionally think in terms of profit, TSQ is a sound economic practice.

### Service Quality Quotient

There are two critical factors in the quality quotient ( $TSQ = Q_f \times Q_p$ ).<sup>4</sup>  $Q_f$  (quality in fact) is the degree to which a service is determined to be both efficient and effective. This determination is normally made by the supplier of the service.  $Q_p$  (quality in perception) is the degree to which the customer experiences satisfaction with the service provided. Because satisfaction depends on the customer's personal experience,

only the customer is qualified to judge whether this aspect of quality exists.

If the customer does not experience satisfaction, then the service cannot be judged as having quality, regardless of the supplier's opinion. Even though customers may be incorrect about the facts, and they often are, only they can judge their level of satisfaction with the service. Therefore, when customers claim dissatisfaction, their reports must be accepted as the truth. For example, when a citizen registers an "attitude complaint" (an objection not to receiving a ticket but to the treatment received from the issuing officer), saying "I just didn't like the way the officer spoke to me," this customer's dissatisfaction with the service rendered is completely valid.

“**TSQ represents a fundamental change in how business is done and how resources are deployed.**”

The relationship between the supplier's objective assessment of the quality and the customer's highly subjective appraisal of the degree of satisfaction experienced from the service are inseparable. Unless both are present, the service cannot be considered to have true quality. As intricately related as the two are, in the final analysis, the weight of judgment rests on the latter.

In police work, a particular task can be carried out with utmost preci-

sion and still fail to satisfy the recipient. As a consequence, the recipient forms a negative perception not only of the attending officer but also of the entire department, and perhaps even the profession. In such instances, total service quality has not been achieved. The objective of TSQ is to manage the customer's experience by efficiently and effectively satisfying real needs in order to develop a shared perception in the community that police officers are high-quality, value-adding service providers.

### Making Service Quality a Way of Life

If TSQ is to become a way of life in a police department, three essential sources of support—technology, leadership, and design—must be ensured during implementation. An effective way to visualize these three essential sources of support for TSQ is to imagine an old-fashioned milking stool which, if properly constructed, can hold an amount of weight many times its own, although it has only three legs. However, if any one of these legs is weak or improperly placed, the stool collapses.

If TSQ is to have a chance of becoming "the way we do things around here" in a law enforcement agency, the three "legs" of technology, leadership, and design must be in place, and be equally strong. Technology, the first "leg" of TSQ, is the complete set of tools, techniques, skills, knowledge, and methods that together make it possible for service of the highest quality to be delivered to the customer. The importance of technology cannot be underestimated. Fortunately, it exists in abundance as a product of

scientific advancements made during the last decade.

The second "leg" of support is leadership. Unless people with power within the agency are willing to be evangelists directing the way toward police service quality, any attempt to eliminate "enforcement" attitudes and replace them with "service" commitments will fail. In other words, unless the people who control the resources and make the decisions within departments are totally committed to make TSQ a reality, it will never happen.

Leaders in successful TSQ transitions consistently display an almost religious zeal when it comes to quality and excellent service. They recognize that change will be difficult and that not everyone in their

command will embrace it with enthusiasm. This is simply because many will need to learn how to see the job and themselves in a new and unfamiliar way. Therefore, strong and courageous leadership that is compassionate but firm in the commitment to TSQ is required.

The last, and perhaps the least appreciated, of the three "legs" in the realization of TSQ is design. The design of the organizational infrastructure—the network of people, facilities, systems, and information—that supports great service is paramount. A basic premise of design is that all organizations are perfectly designed to produce results. When the results are less than satisfactory, nothing less than an improvement in the

design will produce more acceptable results. Attempts to change the results without addressing the underlying structures that generate them will be futile.

For example, the issue of steady depersonalization of the relationship between the police and the community continues to plague many metropolitan departments. The classic "answer" to the problem of alienation has been the adoption of public relations strategies. Unfortunately, this solution focuses more on eliminating the symptoms than on redesigning the underlying structure that gives rise to them. If the underlying structure is examined and treated, the problem could be eliminated.

### **TSQ and the Brighton Police Department**

When the transformation of the Brighton Police Department began in late 1985, TSQ was an unknown entity. Today, it is the way this police agency conducts its business.

By the mid-1980s, the police department had fallen out of favor with the town's citizens. Complaints were up, and officer morale was down. A lack of confidence in the police department resulted in strained police-community relations and a poor public image.

After a systematic assessment that involved gathering a mass of data through interviews and direct observation of street officers and supervisors as they conducted their routine activities, three primary causal issues became apparent. These issues were: 1) The department's flawed "world view" about people and police work that its officers felt compelled to adopt,

**Table 1**  
**Realities of Service Work**

- A service is produced and consumed at the moment of delivery. It can't be manufactured in advance.
- Service is delivered through the medium of human interaction; therefore, the customer is a co-producer.
- Service is produced wherever the customer is and delivered by people who are beyond the immediate control and influence of management.
- Providing service is emotional labor, not physical. Emotional "strength" is ever-more important than brawn.
- The quality and value of service are internal to the customer's personal experience. The customer, not the supplier, is the final judge of both.
- If the service is not performed properly, it cannot be "recalled." Reparations or apologies are the only means of recovery.

2) insufficient interpersonal communication skills, and 3) pervasive low self-esteem among officers that was exacerbated by the low regard in which they were held by the community.

After a thorough analysis of the findings and lengthy discussions of available alternatives, department administrators agreed that treating the symptoms while ignoring the problem would be futile. Therefore, they adopted a plan of action that targeted the following objectives:

- 1) To create a service mission that would pervade the department's culture
- 2) To develop and strengthen interpersonal communication skills of all personnel, and
- 3) To build the self-esteem and self-confidence of patrol officers to improve behavioral flexibility and tolerance in dealing with others.

Such changes in the culture maximized the gains made.

### **Adjusting the Police "World View"**

The creation of a service mission called for a profound change in the existing world view. Policies were established that, although not popular at first, required the staff to look at their jobs differently. For example, if the service mission was to become a reality, the staff had to become experts in customer service.

To this end, the police agency initiated an ongoing training effort that systematically built up each officer's capacity to influence and relate to people encountered on the job in a positive manner. Thereafter, in all person-to-person contacts, the agency required officers to demon-

strate service to the customer and to provide a mutually satisfying conclusion to each and every customer contact.

In addition, the department called for a "moratorium" on attitude complaints. Traditionally,

**“  
By embracing the  
goal of total service  
quality, the police  
department changed  
the way it does  
business....  
”**

when a complaint was registered with the department, it met with either a formal, internal investigation or an apathetic, "I'll look into it and get back to you" response from the supervisor on duty. The majority of investigations into attitude complaints were found to be inconclusive or management ruled in favor of the employee. This practice satisfied no one. Customers were informed that they and their perceptions were wrong, and the opportunity for the officer to learn new behavior was lost.

The moratorium mandated that attitude complaints be directed to the officer for correction. If not corrected satisfactorily, additional action was taken, up to and including dismissal from the department. And, even though attitude complaints were no longer investigated, they were carefully documented with a view toward early discovery of negative individual patterns of

behavior so that managers could take preventative and remedial actions.

### **Communication Skills**

The language "sub-system" that reinforced the prevailing world view was also scrutinized. Terms and phrases, such as "response call" and "victim" were replaced with "service call" and "customer." Derogatory terms, such as "dirt bag," were discouraged after it became clear how such a label could be applied too easily to any customer being served. Also, citizens could perceive the label, even if it was unspoken, just by the officer's attitude toward them.

Even the department's motto "To serve and to protect" was replaced with "We are here to serve you." This motto is displayed on all department vehicles and adorns departmental business cards and stationery. Although service is regarded as a primary part of the police officer's job, this viewpoint had to be strongly championed in order to instill a sense of the service mission in each officer.

### **Officer Esteem**

While progress was being made on addressing a faulty world view and interpersonal skills deficiencies through a balanced combination of training and officer development, the final objective, building self-esteem, was somewhat more challenging. Many in the department had developed an overbearing style that they presented as a way to convince others, and especially themselves, that they held themselves in high regard. The difficulty was that over time, this facade became habitual.

**Table 2**  
**Major Obstacles in Total  
 Service Quality in Police Work**

1. Perceiving customers as "problems"
2. Believing police are in a position of authority
3. Focusing on events rather than processes
4. Relying on protocol and political expediency
5. Failing to recognize dependence on the goodwill of the community
6. Preoccupation with short-term results
7. Inability to listen to the customer
8. Lack of "customer friendly" language
9. Staffed by "wrong" people
10. Inability to see police work as a business
11. Lack of leadership

Because this image interfered with the customer's perception of excellent service, the management team faced the possibility that some of the current staff could not be "rehabilitated." Recruitment and selection systems were needed that would infuse the department with service-oriented rather than enforcement-oriented personnel.

Therefore, over the past 6 years, the police department's commitment to total service quality can best be exemplified by the development of a "model cop" concept—the individual who best fits the expectations of the community for superior service. The model cop concept calls for the right combination of temperament, maturity, values, social skills, world view, and tolerance for human contact.

The fundamental belief underlying this notion is that a candidate with excellent interpersonal skills and an orientation to service can be trained to be a police officer. However, a recruit lacking the requisite skills and orientation cannot be trained to deliver good service, no matter how skilled they are in enforcing the law. Recognizing this, the police department initiated the process of engineering police officer jobs to work toward advocating customer needs.

#### **Does TSQ Work in Policing?**

Admittedly, TSQ was an "experiment" conducted within the Brighton Police Department over the past 6 years. Yet, as with any valid experimental research, the real

proof of success could be measured only through statistical findings verifying that the officers were, in fact, customer service-oriented. The department's management agreed at the outset that sufficient and accurate data were required throughout the process so that success could be measured.

One element of data reviewed was the number of officer misconduct complaints. This review showed that internal investigations of complaints of officer misconduct dropped from 15 in 1985 to only 2 in 1990. In addition, attitude complaints were eliminated altogether.

Another statistic of particular significance dealt with employee turnover, which fell from 45% in 1985 to 0% in 1990. And, there were only two separations from service in the preceding 2 years, both due to termination.

One telling productivity measure is the average amount of free patrol time. Although the crime rate in Brighton has been flat or in a gradual decline since 1987, this measure dropped from 66% in 1984 to only 37% in 1990. This is a clear indication of increased community confidence in the police as a service provider rather than as an enforcement agency.

These measures can be accepted as proof that TSQ can and will work to restore fully the confidence of the community in police agencies throughout the country. However, the road to success is not without obstacles.

#### **Major Barriers to TSQ**

Three major barriers to success in the transition to TSQ became

evident in the Brighton Police Department, although many more may come to light in other police agencies. (See table 2.) First, the sheer inertia that resides in the police culture as a whole had to be overcome. This required a dismantling of the prevailing world view of police work. The deeply entrenched "old view" in Brighton was supplanted over time with a vision that focused on the customer and was driven by a commitment to customer satisfaction.

A second formidable obstacle was the seductiveness of short-term solutions. The Brighton management team realized that TSQ could not be institutionalized through training or policymaking alone. The real issues underlying the legendary ineffectiveness of police agencies in providing superior service to their

customers would take time and persistence to resolve.

Finally, there was the question of the larger system of which the police department was a part. It became clear early in the process that the city organization influenced the transformation of the police department from an enforcement agency to a quality service provider. Depending on the values and vision of city management, the realization of TSQ in any department could either be impeded or supported. Brighton's police chief found himself spending more time than anticipated trying to convert the initial resistance to this new way of thinking.

### Conclusion

Significant progress has been made to move the Brighton Police

Department along the right path in the never-ending journey to excellence in police work. By embracing the goal of total service quality, the police department changed the way it does business in pursuit of unconditional customer and officer satisfaction. ♦

### Endnotes

<sup>1</sup>This includes the municipalities of Baltimore, Maryland; Phoenix, Arizona; Fort Collins, Colorado; Bellevue, Washington; and Asheville, North Carolina.

<sup>2</sup>Karl Albrecht and Ron Zemke, *Service America! Doing Business In The New Economy* (Homewood, Illinois: Dow-Jones Irwin, 1985).

<sup>3</sup>A.C. Rosander, *The Quest for Quality in Services* (Milwaukee, Wisconsin: ASQC Quality Press, 1989).

<sup>4</sup>Patrick L. Townsend, *Commit To Quality* (New York: John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 1986).

## Hidden Knife

During a post-arrest search, an agent in the FBI's New York field division observed this pen clipped in the subject's shirt pocket. An examination of the pen revealed a hidden blade measuring 2 1/2 inches in length. To expose the blade, the top of the pen is simply removed and then placed on the other end to provide a handle for the knife. While this weapon poses a serious threat to law enforcement and corrections personnel, it could easily have been overlooked as an innocent writing instrument. ♦

## Unusual Weapon

