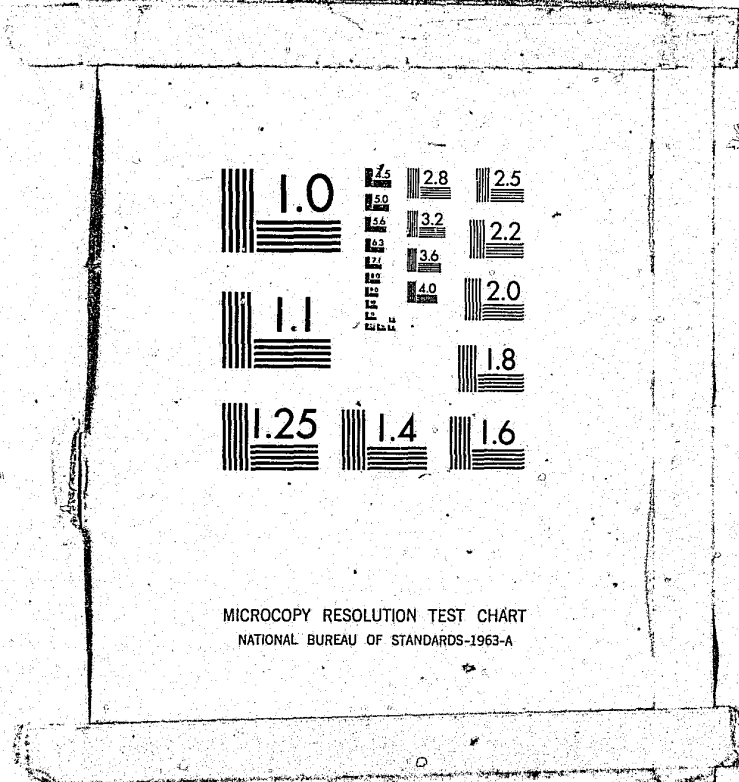


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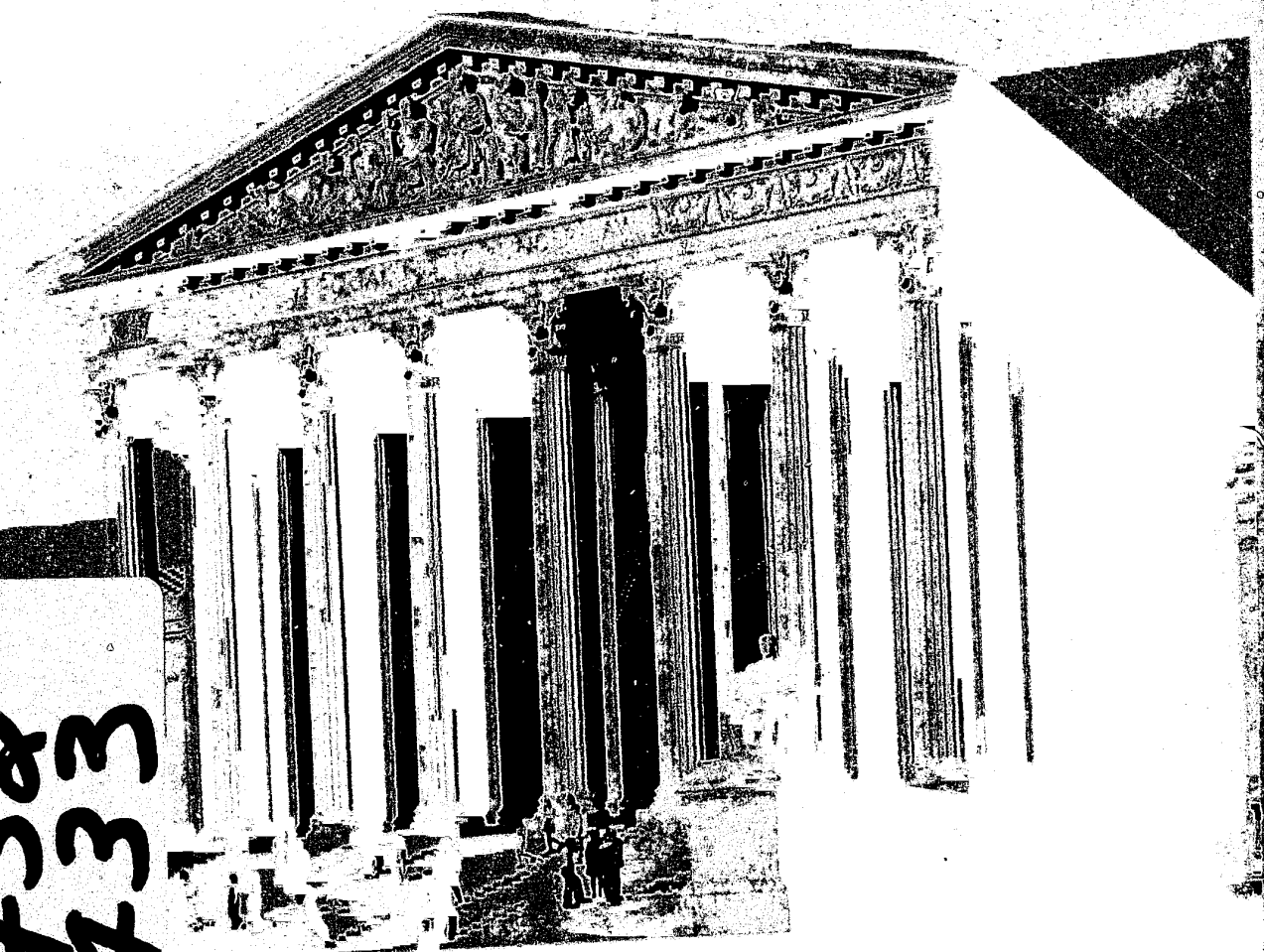
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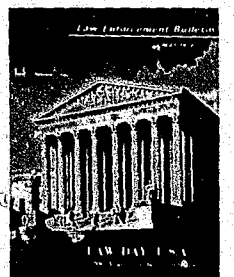
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THE COVER

Shown on this month's cover is the U.S. Supreme Court Building, Washington, D.C. Under the rule of law, our Nation's cherished heritage of freedom and justice has been perpetuated. Mr. Kelley's Message, beginning on page one of this issue, discusses the primacy of law in a free and just society. Photo courtesy of the Foundation of the Federal Bar Association.



80432

THE TOTAL EXAMINATION ENVIRONMENT

A Successful Police Promotional Experience



COL. RICHARD A. KING
Chief
Fairfax County Police, Fairfax, Va.



CORNELIUS J. O'KANE
Deputy Director of Personnel for
Fairfax County, Fairfax, Va.

Is it possible for 400 police officers to shape a promotional examination and have that process identify the most qualified candidates for promotion? The Fairfax County, Va., Police and Personnel Departments decided to find out by trying participatory management in the police promotional field. Did it work? Yes! In fact, the results exceeded all expectations of the staff. Commenting on the process, one candidate observed, "It was an excellent promotional examination. I gave it my best shot, and although I wasn't pro-

moted, no one is to blame but myself." A district commander noted, "I am amazed at the attitude of candidates who were not promoted."

Background

The promotional processes employed by police departments are being challenged with increasing frequency by law enforcement officers seeking upward mobility in the field. A number of departments have faced vexing court suits challenging specific phases of a promotional system.

This article describes a unique and innovative approach to police promotions by the Fairfax County Police and Personnel Departments—an employee-structured promotional examination process. Although participative involvement is the central feature, this would not have sufficed without exhaustive attention to details and individual problems.

While the Fairfax County experience seems to satisfy many of the issues raised in the courts, the authors wish to recognize that this process will not insulate a police department from

court challenges, nor was this its primary intention. Rather, the goals were twofold: to design a promotional process which would accurately rank the most proficient candidates and introduce a system which not only was fair, but which was acknowledged to be fair by all who participated in it. Not only would this improve overall morale in the department, but it would greatly ease the transition of the promoted officers by giving them a departmentwide stamp of legitimacy.

In 1972, the Fairfax County Police Department experienced a court suit relative to the oral board phase of the police promotional system, and as a result, the court struck down the eligible list. Although a promotional list was finally established, nothing has produced more acrimony among the officers than discussions about past promotions.

Given a candidate population dissatisfied, if not hostile, and suspicious, if not distrustful, there was a need for openness and sincerity. Knowing that quality, validated testing instruments and pre-examination techniques might win court cases but certainly do not prevent them, it was felt that scrupulous concern must be shown to the entire examination environment in order to communicate to the police force the high regard accorded by the county to their service careers.

During consideration of how to develop this thesis, the thought emerged, "Why not attempt an employee-structured promotional system?" An employee task force, organized a year earlier, had proved very effective in generating new concepts, gaining feedback relative to existing programs, and facilitating the introduction of operational and administrative programs. There was a history of employee involvement in staff decisionmaking.

Realizing the need for quality testing and evaluation instruments, a pro-

fessional firm was awarded a contract to aid in developing this customized promotional system. Their cooperation and support of the concept was crucial to the development of such a program. After several introductory meetings with the firm, the deputy director of the Fairfax County Personnel Department and the commander of the police department's Services Bureau were designated to coordinate the development of the system.

Positions Open

The tests were to select persons for promotion to three ranks: corporal, sergeant, and lieutenant. A total of 333 police officers and investigators were eligible for promotion to corporal, 32 corporals were eligible for promotion to sergeant, and 25 sergeants were eligible for promotion to lieutenant.

Consultation Meetings

In order to gain maximum input from candidates competing for promotion, representatives from the classes of Police Officer I, Police Officer II, and Criminal Investigator were asked to attend a consultation meeting with the consultant and project coordinators. In a memorandum disseminated to members of the department detailing the anticipated process, each squad of police officers was asked to select democratically among themselves a squad member to attend the consultation meeting on their behalf. Forty-seven employees, representing 333 officers and investigators, participated in this consultation meeting regarding the corporal promotions. Representatives had an opportunity to question the background of the consultant firm—their experience, their knowledge of validation procedures, etc. Two additional consultation meetings were held for all cor-

porals competing for sergeant and all sergeants competing for lieutenant.

These meetings were both revealing and memorable. The anger and aggressive indictments of past practices and perceived injustices thundered forth. Gradually the coordinators of the session put the message across, "Why don't you call the shots," and the voting began on the process components. There was only one prohibition and that was that nothing considered a breach of police or personnel professionalism would receive concurrence; however, it was not necessary to invoke this escape clause in any instance.

It must be admitted that some approved practices certainly took a beating, and the personnel coordinator blanched perceptibly at the weights assigned to examination components by vote, especially considering the high quality material available. It was the police coordinators' turn in the "barrel" when candidates for sergeant and lieutenant insisted that their oral boards be staffed by members who "never" had any relationship with the department or jurisdiction. In all, the three groups took 17 to 20 votes, and their decisions are reflected in the accompanying table.

As these meetings terminated, it cannot be said that the attitude of the men had been transformed; the feeling prevailed that management was taking an interesting posture, but would somehow betray their hopes in the end. When the examination announcements were published and individually mailed to each candidate containing every particular item they had requested (except for the reduction of the duration of the sergeant and lieutenant list to 1 year), there was a dramatic attitudinal change which continued to grow more favorable and enthusiastic through the entire process. Also in this mailing were an application and a pamphlet that described how to take a written test.

Consensus Items

In the meeting with prospective corporals, candidates requested that an oral board not be given. Recognizing the sheer numbers involved—333—the police department was not particularly anxious to utilize an oral board for police corporals. Since participating members had also requested that there be no failing mark in any phase, there was no mechanism for substantially reducing the number of candidates eligible for the oral board.

The written examination was discussed in considerable detail. The participants agreed to the necessity for having some instrument to identify a candidate's knowledge of police work, so there was very little mention of not having a written examination. They did voice, however, a strong desire to have only job-related questions. The overriding concern of all candidates relative to the written examination was one of not having a failing score. Heretofore, a score of 70 had been required of applicants in order for them to be eligible to compete at the next level in the process; thus, candidates had been eliminated at each phase. A number of percentages was discussed as to a weight for the written examination, but 60 percent was finally set with a unanimous vote by the 47 representatives of the candidates for corporal. Candidates for sergeant and lieutenant voted in their meetings for a weight of 30 percent.

Candidates for sergeant and lieutenant voted for an oral board. The sergeants' group recommended a weight of 30 percent, with all outside members; the lieutenants' group, hearing of the sergeants' recommendation during their consultation meeting, also voted for a 30-percent weight, with one inside member on the board. Arguments for and against external/internal panelists

were discussed, but the consensus was that having all oral board members from outside the Fairfax County Police and Personnel Departments offered more objectivity.

Evaluation by supervisors was expected to play a part in selecting those to be promoted. The basic questions were: should this evaluation be based on performance in the current rank, or on potential to perform in the rank being sought; and which supervisor should prepare the evaluation?

Candidates for all three ranks requested that performance in their current position be utilized as a basis for evaluating them for promotion. As to "performance evaluation," candidates voiced the notion that how well an individual performs the duties in his present rank is a meaningful indication of the likelihood of how well the person will perform the duties of the next higher rank. Candidates for corporal asked that their direct supervisors evaluate them with no changing of scores by higher staff. Candidates for sergeant requested that their sergeant, lieutenant, and captain evaluate them separately and then meet together to determine a "consensus" rating, which would not necessarily be an average. Lieutenant candidates requested a rating by their lieutenant and captain separately with a consensus rating also. Both ranks requested no review above those levels (in the previous examinations, staff officers had reduced or raised performance scores). Each of the three groups asked that a weight of 30 percent be placed on this category.

All candidates requested that a weight of 10 percent be placed on seniority. The minimum number of years of service required to be eligible to compete was given a value of 70. For the 8 years of service beyond the qualifying period of 2 years, the candidate received 2 points per year.

He received an additional point for each of the next 10 years of service. Therefore, a 10-year veteran officer competing for corporal received 70 for 2 years of qualifying service and 2 points for each of the next 8 years, yielding a total score of 86. Since a candidate with only minimal qualifications would receive a 70, the 10 percent factor would reduce the 10-year officer's final score advantage to 1.6 points. It is interesting to note that the final eligible list showed a negative correlation between written examination scores and years of service. The younger officers tended to do better.

Bibliography

A salient issue was the development of a bibliography of readings from which test questions would be drawn. During the consultation meetings, all candidates voiced support for the posting of a bibliography. The consultant indicated that a complete or partial bibliography could be provided to the department, emphasizing that availability of the reading materials should be a primary concern to the department in publishing a bibliography. This issue presented a serious dilemma. On the one hand, there existed a commitment to the publication of a bibliography. On the other hand, the source material for the validated test involved a large number of books. The problem was resolved by publishing a partial bibliography, which, it was explained, contained source material for at least 50 percent of the questions. In this manner, the jurisdiction was able to make available a substantial number of valuable study materials.

Since local libraries and colleges did not have adequate supplies of the books in question, a decision was reached to purchase 40 sets of 4 books each to be available for candi-

dates competing for the ranks of corporal and sergeant. An informational bulletin was distributed to all candidates stating that the department would purchase these books, and an accompanying chart illustrated the manner in which the books were to be distributed—a set of books for approximately each eight eligible candidates. Sets of books were also ordered for lieutenant candidates. The purchase of this source material was costly to the county, but it demonstrated management interest and concern to the candidates. Also, the texts will continue to be used in the police department for training programs. The following four books were utilized for the corporals' and sergeants' examinations:

O'Connor, George W., and Charles Vanderbosch. *Patrol Operation*, 2d ed., IACP, Washington, D.C., 1970.

Lamore, N. F. *Supervision of Police Personnel*, 2d ed., Prentice Hall, Englewood Cliffs, N.J., 1970.

Gocke, B. W., and G. T. Payton. *Police Sergeants Manual*, 5th ed., Legal Book Corp., Los Angeles, Calif., 1972.

Clift, Raymond. *Guide to Modern Police Thinking*, 3d ed., W. H. Anderson, Co., Cincinnati, Ohio 1973.

Development of Performance Evaluation

The promotional firm assigned a member of its staff to work with the project coordinators to develop a performance evaluation form and instructions. Two forms were developed, one for corporals and sergeants and one for lieutenants. Categories relating to supervisory/management skills were included in the form for lieutenants.

The following categories were

established for police corporal and sergeant: technical police knowledge; learning ability; quality of work; judgment/analytical ability; interpersonal relationship abilities; attitude (job demeanor); ability to function under pressure; and initiative.

For lieutenant, the following categories were developed: technical police knowledge; supervisory knowledge; leadership ability; judgment/analytical ability; quality of work; interpersonal relationship abilities; ability to function under pressure; willingness to assume responsibility; and management skills.

After developing the categories with a detailed analysis of each, a numerical index from 64 to 100, grouped into 5 descriptive categories, was established. The categories were dispersed as follows:

64-69 The ratee's knowledge/performance is not as good as that of most persons in the rank being rated;

70-77 The ratee's knowledge/performance is not quite as good as that of the persons in the rank being rated;

78-86 The ratee's knowledge/performance is at the level of the average person in the rank being rated;

87-94 The ratee's knowledge/performance is better than the average person in the rank being rated; and

95-100 The ratee's knowledge/performance is almost always better than most persons in the rank being rated.

A very essential feature of an evaluation system is a clear and uniform understanding by raters as to the way

subordinates should be evaluated; therefore, an instructional format was developed and training sessions were

"A very essential feature of an evaluation system is a clear and uniform understanding by raters as to the way subordinates should be evaluated"

arranged for all police supervisors in the department. Each factor was very thoroughly explained to supervisors so that all raters would be employing the same references to the factor.

A number of instruments have been developed to measure performance ratings. The key to personnel evaluations, though, is well-developed standards of performance. It is one thing to have job descriptions thoroughly defined; it is another to have standards of performance for measuring the degree to which the person gets results.

In evaluating employees, it is always difficult for supervisors to strike what could be termed as an "average" or "norm." The supervisors in this case were asked to establish a "benchmark." They were instructed: "The basic point of reference, or benchmark, on which the rating standards are based is the concept of the 'average performer.' The concept of the average performer was defined as a level of performance which represents the average level of performance, or norm, which the rater had observed throughout his entire career in both working with and supervising police officers functioning in the rank in question." The instructions involved many other crucial areas such as avoiding the "most recent effect"—imbalance in ratings caused by a recent outstanding contribution by a member. To maintain continuity in evaluations, supervisors were asked

to grade all subordinates on one category before proceeding to another.

To avoid comparisons, candidates were evaluated on the same day, with several exceptions due to leave time and sickness. All candidates were allowed to see their score sheets. An appeal format was developed which allowed candidates an opportunity to appeal to a police major of their choice. They had requested this appeal avenue. However, the candidates agreed that appeals relating to a supervisor's professional judgment would not be accepted; implicit in their requests for supervisors to evaluate without staff review was the notion that they had to keep the score. Only appeals relating to personal biases were accepted. Of the 400 evaluations, only 11 candidates appealed. Six candidates received minor changes because their raters acknowledged the change was necessary; the scores of the remaining five were sustained.

Written Examination

For written examinations to be meaningful, validation is a prerequisite. The Equal Employment Opportunities Commission's (EEOC) guidelines state that validated tests shall be locally validated if it is technically feasible. While the firm had used content-valid and job-valid tests for over a decade, the EEOC guidelines suggest that content validity be supplemented by empirical-statistical validation where technically possible. This firm had devoted extensive work to meet these guidelines.

The consultant firm developed a self-administered job analysis checklist. A representative number of corporals, sergeants, and lieutenants described the duties of their various jobs by checking off task statements on the checklist and providing information as to frequency and impor-

tance. In addition, members of the firm conducted on-site analysis interviews of many of the different tasks performed by members of the department. Extensive interviews were conducted with the commanders of the major sections to determine what specific tasks were performed by officers and supervisors and to provide a program of verification by the on-site analysts.

The consultant firm had just previously completed the empirical-statistical validation of two equated forms of a written promotional examination for the position of sergeant. The job analysis information indicated Form 1 of this examination was also content valid for the position of sergeant in Fairfax County. Accordingly, the decision was made to use Form 1 as the written examination in this selection process.

Job analysis also disclosed that in Fairfax County the job of corporal was much more responsible than in many police departments. In fact, it was found that the duties and tasks of a corporal were very similar indeed to the duties and tasks of a sergeant. Accordingly, a decision was made to use Form 2 of the empirically statistically validated sergeant examination as the corporal examination in Fairfax County. Job analysis indicated that this form was also content valid for the rank.

For lieutenant, a specific examination had been developed to fit the job analysis so as to provide a content-valid examination for this rank. The law questions in all three examinations were based specifically on the criminal and traffic codes of the State of Virginia and were specifically referenced to these codes. As an additional check, the accuracy of the key answers of the questions were subjected to a technical review by the Commonwealth's Attorney of Fairfax County.

All of the questions in the examination were referenced to a bibliography of standard texts in police science and police management, and a majority of the questions were referenced to the four books made available to candidates for study.

The written examination for corporal and sergeant was administered at a local high school, utilizing 13 classrooms so that all applicants for one promotion could take the examination at the same time. The candidates had agreed that no make-up examination would be provided. Since weekdays might conflict with court schedules, the examination was administered on Saturday morning. Candidates for lieutenant took the written examination on Monday following the other examination. Candidates who did not compete for the promotion or who were not eligible to take the examination—those with under 2 years of service—worked overtime to fill the voids. Employees taking the examination were not granted overtime compensation. Personnel assigned to the 12 to 8 a.m. shift were allowed to take leave so that fatigue would not be a factor in taking the examination.

Applicants were given 3½ hours to take the examination and an additional one-half hour to note written exceptions to any questions. Less than 10 applicants availed themselves of this avenue. The prevailing comments of those applicants leaving the examination rooms were, "It was a fair exam." The Personnel Department administered the examination with monitors who had been especially trained. The police department decided to have a representative of the promotional firm available on Monday and Tuesday after the examination to allow all candidates an opportunity to view a keyed test booklet and discuss additional exceptions to the questions. The representative spent most of those 2 days by him-

DECISIONS RENDERED BY REPRESENTATIVE GROUPS' VOTES

| | <i>Corporal</i> | <i>Sergeant</i> | <i>Lieutenant</i> |
|---|--|--|--|
| Type of examination and weights: | | | |
| Written..... | 60 percent..... | 30 percent..... | 30 percent. |
| Special performance evaluation. | 30 percent..... | do..... | Do. |
| Oral..... | None..... | do..... | Do. |
| Seniority..... | 10 percent..... | 10 percent..... | 10 percent. |
| Duration of eligible list..... | 2 years..... | 1 year..... | 2 years. |
| Pass point ¹ | Top 100 eligibles to comprise list. | No failure—ranking list only. | No failure—ranking list only. |
| Performance evaluation type: | | | |
| Type..... | On performance in present rank (police officer). | On performance in present rank (corporal). | On performance in present rank (sergeant). |
| Number of factors..... | 8..... | 8..... | 9. |
| Rater(s)..... | Supervisor..... | Next 3 supervisory echelons. | Next 2 supervisory echelons. |
| Appeal procedure..... | To bureau commander of candidate's choice. | To bureau commander of candidate's choice. | To bureau commander of candidate's choice. |
| Written examination: | | | |
| Number of items..... | 100..... | 100..... | 100. |
| Review/appeal procedure. | See text..... | See text..... | See text. |
| Oral evaluation..... | None..... | 3 external panel members. | 3 external panel members. |
| Appeals from final exam results. | None..... | None..... | 1. ² |
| Seniority formula..... | Uniform..... | Uniform..... | Uniform. |

¹ There was to be no failing score established on examination components. All scores were to be averaged into a final examination score according to assigned weights.

² Upon refusal, appeal was dropped after first level.

self, because fewer than 10 percent of the candidates asked to view the booklet. Why? Candidates indicated that the questions were fair, and they didn't know them. This attitude was in sharp contrast to previous post-examination comments.

Oral Board

The oral board, which had previously worked together, proved to be very effective in evaluating candidates for promotion to sergeant and lieutenant. All oral examiners employed by the firm had received training in the art of oral examination. The board consisted of a member of the firm, a police chief from a large city in Virginia far removed from Fairfax County, and a deputy chief from a large department in another State. Hence, no member of the board knew any candidate competing for promotion.

The oral board was conducted in a suite rented by the county so that candidates would not have to report to a police facility for the interview. The project coordinators felt that such a setting was more conducive to a relaxed atmosphere. Each applicant was allowed 1 hour, if necessary, to respond to the same questions. The prevailing comment coming from candidates taking the oral board was, "It was a good board."

According to one seasoned oral board member, the attitude of supervisors appearing before the board was generally better in comparison with candidates who had been interviewed elsewhere. This is attributed, in part, to employee involvement in the process.

Notification and Eligibility Lists

Simultaneous with the publication of the three eligible lists, each candidate was mailed an individual sheet showing the separate component

scores and detailing the arithmetic steps in arriving at the final rating. An accompanying memorandum identified the date and place where candidates could review their test sheets and verify the computations. Less than 5 percent availed themselves of this opportunity.

Promotions

The department promoted 57 members of the organization as a result of this promotional process—the largest in the history of the department. While the usual level of post-promotion blues was anticipated, this was not the case. In this promotional process, members of the department felt they had more than a "fair shake." They had asked for a specific process, and they received it. One could not begin to suggest that such a promotional exercise would work in all police departments; however, the experiment exceeded all expectations of the staff in Fairfax County. Those employees promoted in this promotional examination were outstanding officers and supervisors.

It is strongly felt that the process, which took 3 months, would not have succeeded with only surface mechanics. It was necessary to give in-depth attention to all facets of the examining environment in order to achieve complete credibility not only for the present promotional series, but also, as a basis for trust and acceptance in the years to come. The following are a few examples of this type of comprehensive concern:

The personnel and police coordinators spoke with more than 150 police officers individually and in groups in order to deal with personal anxieties, problems, dispensing information, clarifying, dispelling rumors, etc.—they were constantly available and receptive.

The oral evaluation was held

in an attractive motel suite for the benefit of the participants.

A sergeant who was hospitalized was given the complete performance evaluation training one-on-one because he was to rate a few officers.

Forty sets of the bibliography were purchased and made available.

Sick or injured officers were administered the tests in their homes.

A community college made a crash course available to officers based on the bibliography. (Eighty-five officers attended, and there was no statistically significant correlation between attendees and final rank on the eligible list.)

Absolute leave policy for 12 to 8 a.m. shift prior to written examination to avoid candidate fatigue.

The presence of the police chief and his entire command staff at the written examination site who remained until the end to obtain reactions.


A final overview of the results of this total examination environment approach reveal:

A very satisfied candidate population.

No union complaints.

A police chief delighted with the caliber of the promotional appointments.

A personnel department with adequate eligible lists and no litigation.

Of course, in promotional testing there is always that problem of the encore. What about the future of police promotions in Fairfax County? While budgetary strictures might require some modification, the Fairfax County Police and Personnel Departments plan to continue participative involvement in future promotional examinations. 

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