

**Analyzing a New Honolulu Police Department Chief's Initial Opportunities:  
A Comparison and Contrast of Different Leadership Styles**

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The Honolulu Police Department (HPD) is at a crossroads. Over the past year, the outgoing administration's lack of solid leadership and management has driven down morale, crippled communication, and raised serious questions about significant decisions' fiscal responsibility. However, there is a glimmer of hope. The Honolulu Police Commission just began selecting a new chief, hopefully one who can use different leadership styles appropriately to help steer the department back on course and begin to rebuild trust.

First and foremost, to enter collaborative relationships with the community, the media, and the police commission, the next leader of the HPD must be able to engage in strategic leadership. Schoemaker et al. (2013) write, "The more uncertain your environment, the greater the opportunity – if you have the leadership skills to capitalize on it." One of the skills they identified, the ability to 'anticipate', will be crucial to reimagining policing in the years to come. With the constantly evolving themes in police-public relations, the next chief can avoid the failure to anticipate reaction to policy changes by opening up lines of communications.

In addition, the next chief will likely emerge with a generalized vision of where to lead the department. However, rather than charge forward and implement sweeping changes *sua sponte*, the next chief should engage in a process, as Dulla (2021) described, of "taking a step back from a situation [to] lead to a better and more strategic decision." By taking the time to build collaborative relationships with community partners, other law enforcement leaders, and from within, the chief can develop their vision into a genuinely inclusive strategic plan for the future.

The second style that would benefit the next chief is that of the transformational leader. Often characterized by exhibiting charisma, transformational leaders serve as an example for others by demonstrating the characteristics and actions they expect to see in their followers. Having a chief who can move legitimately from words to action will be critical during the initial transition period.

The initial process of engaging stakeholders in a collaborative visioning process in and of itself would both “intellectually stimulate employees” (Bass 1990) and exhibit the “individualized consideration” (Riggio 2013) component key to transformational leadership. However, by then communicating the shared vision clearly and convincingly, the chief has the chance to “inspire followers [and] to move them to action” (Riggio, 2013). Perhaps most important of all will be a chief who has the fortitude to lead by example, especially when faced with unforeseen circumstances.

Unlike a transformational style, transactional leadership requires resources that may not initially be available to an incoming chief (Dulla, 2021). This third style, characterized by someone who “gets things done by making, and fulfilling, promises of recognition, pay increases, and advancement” (Bass, 1990), will likely not gain initial success. Another potential pitfall for transactional leaders is the “prescription for mediocrity” Bass (1990) explains happens when leaders only get involved with their personnel to impose discipline when things go wrong.

Some continued organizational benefit from continuing and eventually expanding traditions instilled by previous transactional leadership is likely. The processes associated with the promotion in rank, the awarding of merit and valor awards, and the

annual 'Officer of the Year' designation have significant value in maintaining morale and promoting transparency.

The final leadership style that will likely only have limited use for the next chief will be that of a situational leader. Northouse (2018) described this style as requiring the leader to identify which of four development levels (based on varying degrees of commitment and competence) best characterizes their follower. Then, the situational leader applies a corresponding leadership style (based on different degrees of supportive and directive behaviors). For instance, highly committed employees with low competence require a high level of direction and a low level of support. A second employee with a high degree of competence and commitment requires a low level of direction and support.

As the leader of over 2,500 individual employees, with a myriad of different development levels, the chief would be hard-pressed to present a public situational style that would satisfy each of their followers. However, this style may be beneficial when dealing with followers on a one-on-one basis.

As Scism (2021) wrote, "it's safe to say that leadership is an art." Whoever emerges from the selection process as the next chief will likely face many challenges in the years to come. The strategic and transformational leadership styles will be beneficial initially; however, transactional and situational approaches may be equally important in the long run. The chief's knowledge and ability to 'artfully' blend leadership styles and adapt to the situations they face will be vital to the success of collaborative partnerships and open, honest, transparent communication. These skills, along with 5 their ability to

articulate and stick to their core values, will ultimately determine how quickly the next chief can reestablish trust.

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