Opportunities for Leadership Transformation:

A Consultancy for the Anywhere Police Department

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The Anywhere Police Department (APD) faces some tough choices. The internal perception is that the APD lacks a shared vision, communication is faltering, people feel isolated, and attempts at coordination have failed. But there is hope; the information contained in this report coupled with the dedication and hard work of the APD administration can improve conditions almost immediately and see continued lasting improvements in all areas of departmental operations.

Research conducted by the APD Human Resources Division developed a list of nine general areas for improvement. The findings and recommendations in this document refer to these corresponding opportunities by using the letter "O" combined with a number. A complete list of these opportunities for improvement is listed in the appendix.

This report is designed to address these opportunities generally with four recommendations: Develop a meaningful vision, establish consistent communication, engage in honest collaboration, and tie it together with coordination. While the recommendations are each focused on specific opportunities, success in one area will likely synergistically help progress in other areas. It also bears mentioning that while this report focuses on repairing internal relationships and improving organizational efficiency, most of the recommendations discussed will also have carry-over benefits and help revolutionize the relationships APD has within the community.

Kotter (2013) described management as "a set of well-known processes" and leadership as being about "vision, about people buying in, about empowerment and, most of all, about producing useful change." Rather than managers, APD team members crave leaders to influence and motivate them (Nayar, 2013).

Recommendation 1: Develop a Meaningful Vision

Many of the APD's challenges (O-3, O-4, O-6, O-8) appear to stem from a lack of a consistent, meaningful vision, mission statement, and values set. Department members mention perceptions of "favoritism" and non-accountability coupled with uneven discipline and a lack of strategic planning into future needs. "Vision and direction are essential for greatness," Blanchard and Stoner (2004) write, yet "[o]nly when the leaders of an organization know that their people understand the agreed-upon vision and direction can they attend to strengthening [its] ability to deliver." In other words, while the APD may have formalized documents detailing its vision, any such direction amounts to wasted time and resources unless the department members share that vision.

The APD should immediately engage in a re-visioning process as soon as practicable. The process certainly won't be simple and will likely require conscious upkeep and attention by the administration to advance. In describing a so-called strategic thinking session, Carucci (2019) lists three practical tips. The first is to focus primarily on the department's vision or "strategic requirements" for success and identify what activities would support them. The next tip is to look at existing resources and determine whether or not they are being used effectively to achieve the vision. Finally, and perhaps most uncomfortably, collaborate with individuals and groups within the department who may or may not tend to agree with the administration's viewpoint.

This final step, involving employees to engage in decision-making, is referred to as participative management. While some leaders may find it counter-intuitive to include subordinates in making decisions, McMillan (2005) argues they are "more

receptive to change than in situations in which they have no voice [and] changes are implemented more effectively." Far from leaders asking department members for suggestions for the sake of appearing to involve them, actual participative management, McMillan argues, requires several conditions from both sides. These are adapted in the table below.

Responsibilities for Engaging in Participative Management	
APD Administration	*Department Members*
Be willing to 'let go' and keep an open mind about the process	Approach the process from an objective, pragmatic point of view
Provide members with guidelines for their contributions	Remain engaged and contribute honestly
Involve member suggestions in the final product	Demonstrate commitment to support and promote the new vision

There is reason to be optimistic. While many police departments worldwide struggled with adapting to the COVID-19 pandemic, the approach taken by the Carlsbad (California) Police Department proved wildly successful. As described by Assistant Chief Mickey Williams (CPOA, 2020), his department came "to an agreement that [they] were going to engage COVID as a challenge." The critical factor was that they not only developed a situation-specific mission statement[1] but then measured all decisions against their mission. Once established, APD can find equal success by making decisions with its new vision and mission in mind.

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[1] According to Williams, the mission statement was to "Maintain redundancy of personnel so that we can maintain our 9-1-1 services and basic investigative duties in the event that we get people that are sick in our department" (CPOA, 2020)

<u>Recommendation 2: Establish Consistent Communication</u>

Consistent communication is critical to spreading the right message. Many of the APD opportunities for success are tied to this concept, as department members have cited a "failure to provide clear direction" and a "lack of communication" (O-1, O-2). This recommendation reviews the basic steps for reassuring communication, how to quash rumors, and the importance of avoiding absentee leadership.

While the APD undoubtedly faces challenges, merely speaking out and identifying the opportunities for improvement shows department team members want to help develop a more productive working environment. Developed by Shapira (2020) and partially adapted below, APD can use the following five steps to encourage a realistic message while helping bolster confidence.

1. "Pause and breathe." In other words, remain calm. Others will look to you as leaders for signs of how to react and will respond accordingly.

2. "Put yourself in your audience's shoes." Be familiar with what your audience will want to know and be prepared to share it. This helps calm and builds trust.

3. "Do your research." Be prepared with solidly sourced facts. Don't speculate.

4. "Speak clearly and confidently." Explain what you know so far. Quoting expert Nancy Duarte, Shapira (2020) writes, "People will be more willing to forgive your in-progress ideas if they feel like they're part of the process."

5. "Have specific next steps." Being ready with a plan of what comes next or what you want the audience to do strengthens their autonomy.

Teams suffering from a lack of information or communication can be prime breeding grounds for rumors. APD can foster trust by stopping rumors and

misinformation through open communication, thereby "eliminating the need for an underground rumor network from the start" (O'Keefe and Buono, 2020). By sharing information proactively, focusing on substance, and anticipating concerns even when none are voiced, leaders can relegate rumors from the organization.

Human beings are social animals who thrive on communication. Feedback and intervention, whether rewarding or constructive, can serve to improve performance. However, non-existent, or worse, hollow feedback can have the ability to undermine and diminish otherwise effective leadership. Calling this phenomenon "absentee leadership," Gregory (2018) characterizes these behaviors as "destructive" and argues they "outlast the impact of both constructive and overtly destructive forms of leadership."

Luckily, avoiding the pitfalls of "absentee leadership" is simple; APD leaders need to be present physically and intellectually. One technique, often called Leadership By Walk[ing] Around (LBWA), involves seemingly spontaneous visits to the workplace by leaders to interact with their staff. As a result, team members get a chance to ask questions and feel supported and valued by leadership, while leaders have an opportunity for authentic one-on-one conversations (Tripp, 2021).

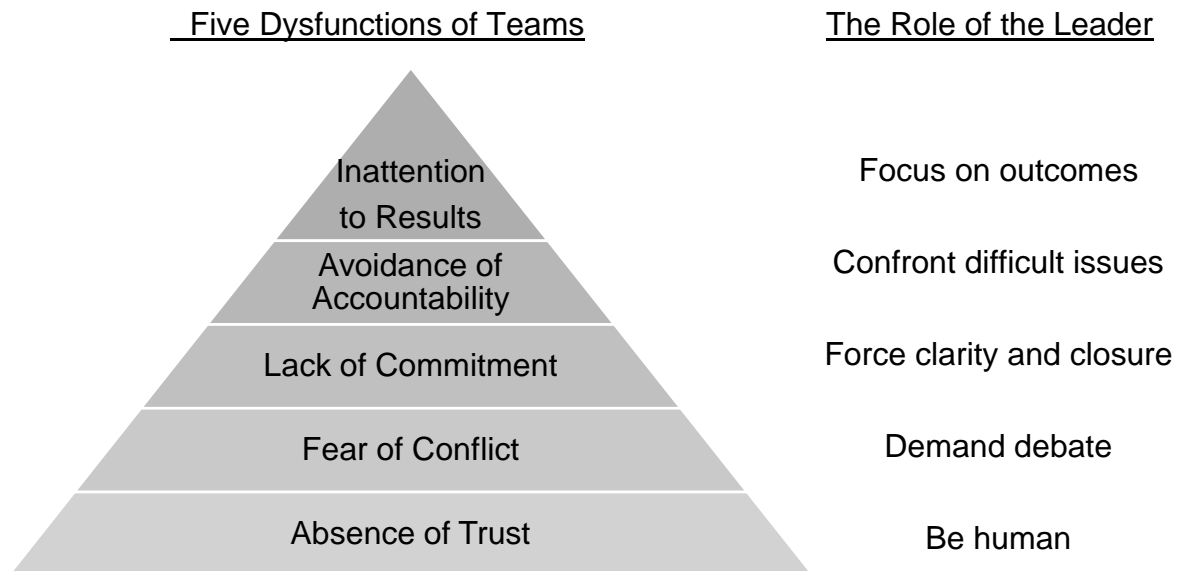## **Recommendation 3: Engage in Honest Collaboration**

There is a perception in APD of favoritism in terms of promotion and assignment delegation, as demonstrated by O-3 and O-5. Regardless of whether the perception is accurate or not, merely its presence can serve to undermine executive authority and effectiveness. To eliminate even the appearance of favoritism requires solid teamwork that is only possible through honest collaboration.

Having charted a shared vision, committed to its success, and opened communication lines, it will become even more essential for the APD to form collaborative partnerships to help reach its goals. CAN (2017) describes "collaboration [as the] key to problem-solving." They list stages in the Police-Community Collaboration Continuum of Interaction, which are equally applicable to the opportunities that can be cultivated by APD leadership. Specifically applied, The APD team, we should:

- Perform outreach. By communicating with internal groups (and eventually with community partners) who have a stake in the department's success, APD can identify potential collaborations and begin laying the groundwork for their success.

- Consult. By sharing information with these potential partners, APD will identify what each can bring to the table.

- Coordinate. APD must then begin working together, "sharing information and resources" (CAN, 2017) to identify gaps as well as overlaps in services.

- Collaborate. APD can work "together to address […] issues by sharing responsibilities, resources and decision making" (CAN, 2017).

As teams begin to reform, APD leadership will need to focus on the role of leaders in preventing the five dysfunctions of teams as described by Lencioni (2003), shown below. When the new groups meet for the first time, there is likely to be an absence of trust. The team members must see leadership express realistic expectations and gratitude for their participation. As conflict develops, the administration must demand debate to turn conflict into collaboration. When commitment wanes, the focus should shift to clarity and closure to keep people

motivated. Along the way, to foster accountability, leaders must confront complex issues. Eventually, as teams begin to perform independently, the focus can shift to delegation and cleaning up the more minor points, helping them focus on outcomes.

Five Dysfunctions of Teams	The Role of the Leader
Inattention to Results	Focus on outcomes
Avoidance of Accountability	Confront difficult issues
Lack of Commitment	Force clarity and closure
Fear of Conflict	Demand debate
Absence of Trust	Be human

Finally, the APD must be careful to avoid faux (or false) collaborations. As described by Shults (2019), the term refers to a collaboration in name only because the stakeholders don't have a significantly broad experience and opinion base. As a result, the collaboration comes from people who have similar opinions to ourselves. Such a process can pose a significant hazard both as the team begins collaborating internally and externally as the APD begins working with community partners towards reaching shared goals.

To keep on track as APD grows its collaborations, teams will have to "engage in thoughtful discourse to discover solutions" while keeping in mind three of Shults' (2019) "C's" associated with proper collaboration, Creativity, Cooperation, and Consensus.

Recommendation 4: Tie It All Together With Coordination

After a shared path forward has been established, APD must shift gears to coordinating its response to new and existing issues. Specifically, opportunities involving the past issuance of conflicting instructions and the previous lack of completion of departmental plans (O-7, O-9) emphasize the need to execute a complete follow-through. The observations also underscore the danger that the positive momentum gained from collaborative work on the previous recommendations may be for naught without proper coordination.

While it will undoubtedly represent a serious investment in time and energy, the APD can undertake the following steps to help improve coordination.

1. Refocus daily watch briefings/roll call meetings. Rather than focus on the rote, infuse meetings with stimulating audio/visual exhibits and encourage participation.

2. Hold weekly command staff meetings to give your division commanders a chance to discuss and coordinate operations amongst the involved stakeholders.

3. Invest the time to have monthly or quarterly division-wide gatherings. While labor-intensive, there is no substitute for everyone hearing a message simultaneously.

4. Form groups to engage in the planning of events or operations that involve more than one division. Remember to include divisions whose impact you may otherwise overlook.

5. Establish a written one-year communication plan. Coordinate ahead of time during which months you plan to push an anti-domestic violence message and during which you will talk about pedestrian safety. Coordinate those messages with other departments.

6. Once decisions have been made based on the best information available, remain resolute, especially when dealing with time-sensitive issues. This will allow projects and operations to stay on track. (Bolton et al., 2008)

Returning to Kotter's (2013) explanation of leadership as "vision, about people buying in, about empowerment and, most of all, about producing useful change," the concept of coordination is as vital as any other. With so much of successful leadership tied to influencing and achieving through followers, a leader who cannot coordinate successfully has been likened to "a body without a head" (Marquis, 2021).

Conclusion

As the APD administration follows the recommendations in this report, they will be engaging in the action-based leadership that Nayar (2013) explains "[allows] leaders [to] focus on creating value." As long as that value continues to grow, the administration will have the opportunity to lead the Anywhere Police Department forward towards a bright future ahead.

By focusing on opportunities for development through shared values setting, communication, honest collaboration, and coordination, the APD will have a broad positive impact on the internal opportunities expressed by its members. More importantly, however, the department will likely use these same newfound skills to discover opportunities for building trust through collaborative partnerships with the community.

Appendix

Opportunities for Improvement

The Anywhere Police Department Human Resources Division staff conducted a series of interviews with department personnel. Through this process, the following nine areas for improvement were identified. The findings and recommendations in this document refer to these corresponding opportunities by using the letter "O" combined with the number below. For instance, a reference to O-2 would refer to opportunity number 2 regarding a perceived lack of communication throughout the agency.

1. Members of the department say the leaders are failing to provide a clear direction for the agency and the members.

2. There is a lack of communication throughout the agency.

3. Favoritism is shown when either promotions or selection to elite positions.

4. Leaders hold members of the department "accountable" yet do not hold themselves accountable.

5. Leaders have their "go-to" people and have little time or energy for those outside of their circle or team.

6. Discipline has been perceived to be disparate. Members have been held to one standard, while leaders have acted unethically and have not been held to the same standard.

7. Numerous chain of command violations have taken place where one leader gives direction while another leader gives countermanding or conflicting instructions.

8. There is a lack of planning or foresight into the future needs of the department.

9. There are numerous false starts and no execution or completion of plans.

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