

New Supervisor Field Training Programs.... Why... Why not!

[Richard Whitehead, CPM](#)

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How many agencies can you think of that have a Field Training Program for their new supervisors, Ten, Two, Zero? This is an area historically overlooked since the inception of Field Training Programs. In their absence where does the expected knowledge, experience, and confidence that should equip a supervisor come from? I am not talking of the skills of leadership but rather the day to day understanding required to fulfill the new supervisory duties such as: answering questions, assigning personnel, scheduling, approving reports, time sheets, and call out notifications, etc. Typically, this bestowing is assumed through the pinning of stripes that must contain everything they need and acts like a nicotine patch. How well is this current method working? With the scrutiny of our agencies being at an all-time high, this would be a good time to review how we train, placing a higher emphasis on our supervisory ranks.

HISTORY

We have had FTO programs for new hires since the 1970's, why not for the sergeant? Failure to Train is one of the seven links to civil liability. Once an officer receives promotion it is normally recommended or required they attend a "new supervisor" course. Often the focus is on leadership and neglecting the daily burdens of the position only learned through the agency. Repeatedly, I have seen brand new supervisors show up on their first day left solely to their own devices. With other supervisors that could, or more importantly should, have been available to mentor them being unavailable for various reasons. Throwing a new supervisor into this pool is subjecting them to the pain and frustration found in the school of hard knocks, which is costly to the new supervisor, fails the public, troops, and the administration.

So back to my question of; how many agencies can you think of that have a new supervisor FTP, and why not: Too hard? Don't know where to start? Too much work? No one to take the lead? Any other reason that may be keeping it at bay?

THE ANSWER

The answer is; it is not that difficult! Programs are easily modeled from what we already know, and the department, the community, and most importantly your new supervisors reap the rewards.

We start with a Job Task Analysis of the position which produces our Performance Categories. Additional analysis will yield Tasks for the Checklist. We then build our Daily Observation and subsequent forms based on what is familiar, customized to the new supervisor's role, and what is left is creating the requisite policy and SOP.



I have created and witnessed implementation of these programs in other agencies, divisions, and off-line positions as well, such as: Fire/EMS, Communications, Corrections, SWAT, Traffic, etc.

As of this writing, the [Post Falls ID Police Department](#), known for staying on the cutting edge of innovation, has just adopted their “[New Sergeant Field Training Program](#)”. The implementation received high praise from all ranks and I am personally honored to have created it.

New Supervisor Field Training Programs can be created and implemented in just under two weeks, obtaining your agency specific: Checklist, Forms, Policy and SOP. This safety net will undergird the aspiring troop considering promotion, reduce risk and liability cost, and ensure all personnel are trained consistently and thoroughly.

Now is the time to address this deficit to ensure confident, secure, capable supervisors offering stability and reducing risk for our communities!

About the Author:

Richard Whitehead is a retired law enforcement commander after devoting 30+ years to public safety. He built his first FTO program in 1992 and accompanying curriculum the following year. He currently trains and consults, on a wide variety of topics through his firm [Richard Whitehead & Assoc. LLC](#), and his FTOP and concepts have been widely adopted across the country.