

Manager's Motivation and 'Demotivation' of Subordinates

And How It Effects Retention

(Morale and Retention)

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Introduction:

In June of 2014 a Supervisor (we will call him 'Joe') in our department was dealing with personal issues and was starting to feel the pressure from not only a personal level, but also in his current position. As far as his position was concerned, Joe was a supervisor for a vital component of the department operation and his attention was split between many different responsibilities and functions, including, but not limited to, training, certifications, scheduling and coordination of special events, public relations, teaching specific topic classes, and the orientation of newly hired officers. Among these responsibilities was the management of approximately sixty auxiliary officers and the orientation of twenty seven newly hired officers, during one of the most significant periods of turnover in the department's history. Joe usually performed this job with the help of another officer of a lower rank, but had maintained the position without this officer for nearly two years. When the previous officer left the department to begin a position with another agency, the Administration did not feel the need to fill the vacancy and it appeared there was little importance to the 'vital component' of the department.

In the midst of the ongoing pressures of the position, Joe's 70-year old father was involved in an automobile accident in June of 2014 and though did not appear to be injured at the time, what would happen over the next six months would have a profound impact on Joe. In September of 2014, Joe's father was admitted to the hospital for an epidural hematoma, which was located in his neck and put pressure on his spine, causing paralysis from the chest down. This hematoma required surgery to remove and thus began the recovery process. Joe was now placed in the position of not only tending to his father's needs, while he was in the hospital, but also the needs of the department, due to the importance of his position. Joe's father remained in the hospital for

six weeks and was progressing enough to be transferred to a rehabilitation facility for further treatment. This would be the last time Joe had a viable conversation with his father, his mentor, his inspiration, the reason he is what he is today man. Three days after his arrival at the rehabilitation center, Joe's father aspirated on food he was trying to eat (the paralysis caused swallowing issues and was sometimes difficult). Joe's father lost consciousness and ended up in cardiac arrest. He was revived, but in a much worse state than what he had been. With the loss of both blood (cardiac arrest) and the choking (lack of oxygen), it was described by doctors as having a stroke, without having a stroke. Joe's father could no longer speak and seemed to 'look through' when someone spoke to him. He could respond non-verbally, with a slight shaking or nodding of his head, but the communication was essentially gone. Joe no longer had the sounding board he could bounce things off of, the person he could go to for trusted advice, when he needed it the most. Joe's father would remain in the hospital, mostly in intensive care, for another six weeks and in early December 2014, as Joe stood at his Dad's bedside, he watched helplessly as his Dad drew his last breath and watched the monitors as his heart stopped. Joe's Dad died and so did Joe, well, a large part of him did. *...and Joe's department did what?*

Disciplinary Practices:

During this time, the department Joe worked for continued business as usual. A five hundred employee organization does not stop for one person. Though the administration knew the situation Joe was having, they seemed not to care. Very few people asked Joe how things were or what they could do to help. Those who inquired the most, were the ones Joe worked with the on a daily basis, his immediate supervisor and the office manager of his division. With the exception of a few people expressing their thoughts and well-wishes, Joe was alone and for the

most part felt deserted, even ostracized by his department. This was created by the apparent lack of respect, which has been festering in the ranks for several years, for all subordinates and created a recipe for disaster for Joe. Understanding there are many things that define a company's character, one of the most significant ones is how the company treat the employees (Hyken, 2015). Now, some would say that a law enforcement agency is not a company, but a paramilitary organization and must be operated in a different manner. I disagree. Though some aspects of a law enforcement agency are specific to law enforcement (i.e. training, firearms, tactics), most operations occur from a business perspective. Certainly, the rank structure of a law enforcement agency is established as the military would be, with officers, corporals, sergeants, lieutenants, etc., all one has to do is apply business titles to the ranks and you have a corporate style company.

In Joe's case, events like this can occur anywhere, with anyone, in any profession. This is evident during the bad times and Administrations should respond to the needs of motivating their employees, all employees, in order to promote retention versus pushing employees out of the barn for greener pastures. This mindset would save the departments a tremendous amount of money. If a department saves money, it saves the taxpayers money and it can be utilized in other areas. In 2013 it was estimated that employee turnover costs businesses \$11 billion a year (Lipman, Why Are So Many Employees Disengaged?, 2013). In most places, \$11 billion is a lot of money and it is estimated it costs employers \$4,000.00 to replace a first line employee to \$7,000.00 for supervisory positions (Dube, Freeman, & Reich, 2010). Law enforcement agencies do not see anywhere near \$11 billion dollars, but if a department can save \$80,000 a year by not replacing 20 employees, it can divert those resources to other areas of need. Where

does it begin? What must a department do to promote retention? ...and Joe's department did what?

Administrators must first realize "morale" is the fuel that runs the engine. Money, benefits, or rank are simply added features; motivation of employees and keeping them engaged with the task at hand, will make them more productive (Lipman, Why Employee Development Is Important, Neglected And Can Cost You Talent, 2013). Based on experience, a department could pay an officer \$20,000.00 more than the next highest paid agency, but if the morale is lower, the new department has a lower reputation, employees may choose to work for \$20,000.00 a year less. If both are equal in low morale, poor reputation, and the treatment of employees, why not make the jump to another department. On his last day, a departing employee told me, "If I'm going to work someplace that treats people like crap, I might as well go someplace where they pay more to put up with it."

One major component of keeping morale at a high level, is discipline and the application of it. Every supervisor should know, appropriate discipline and the application of it, may, in the eye of the receiver, be a morale buster, but to those looking in from the outside, the 'on-looker', it is entirely different. For the on-looker, discipline on one person could have a negative, ripple effect on the ones close to the employee, but it could serve as motivator for them to do better and strive to be successful. To the on-lookers not so close to the receiver of discipline, it could potentially boost morale, especially if the receiver is that "special employee", who has 'skated' his entire career, living on the edge, violating the rules, making a mockery of the department, but still always seems to get the accolades and the increases in rank. As evil as it sounds, humans

sometimes strive on other's misfortune and in a sense promotes positive results because the on-lookers believe the receiver deserves the misfortune (Ben-Zeév, 2009).

Knowing every situation is different, discipline is not. Merriam-Webster's Dictionary defines discipline as: *control that is gained by requiring that rules or orders be obeyed and punishing bad behavior*. Administrators must use discipline for those who violate the rules and to provide an example to other employees that certain behavior is unacceptable and there will be consequences for this unacceptable behavior. However, for this method to work, discipline must be firm, fair, and consistent. Experience tells us inconsistent discipline breeds animosity, resentment, and eventually affects the performance of the employees. If you have two employees, who both have traffic accidents and have no other infractions with the department; is it fair to apply discipline in an apparent abusive manner to one and allow the other to slide by with simple slap on the wrist? Most logical people would disagree and would agree that discipline should be applied fairly and in a progressive manner (low punishment to high punishment). Another morale buster, would be to 'lay the hammer down' on an employee for their first time mistake, instead of providing for a 'counseling' in order to correct the problem and at the same time encourage them to do better. Inconsistencies in the application of discipline will also affect the trust and belief in the Administration and they will lose credibility. Slowly, employees will become less and less engaged and morale and productivity will suffer. Studies have shown, employees who are engaged and care about their duties outperform those, who are not (What Drives Employee Engagement and Why It Matters, 2012, pg. 2). Sooner or later, administrators will have to change their mindset in order to encourage their employees to become more involved in the department they work for. They will need to build a sense of

loyalty in an attempt to promote the success of the organization (What Drives Employee Engagement and Why It Matters, 2012, pg 4). We recognize that discipline plays a vital role in the morale of any department, it is only one piece to the puzzle. ...*and Joe's department did what?*

Opportunity for Advancement:

We have looked into the effect of improper discipline on the morale of a department and it would appear there is a direct link to low morale and inconsistent discipline. There is another factor that can have a positive or negative effect on morale and retention and it is the opportunity for advancement. We discussed Joe's duties in his position and referred to: "...*the orientation of twenty seven newly hired officers, during one of the most significant periods of turnover in the department's history*". During this period of time, out of those twenty-seven positions, three senior supervisors left the department for 'greener' pastures. Considering the current turnover rate, this left the department scrambling for new supervisors and trying to find ones that were qualified for the position. The department begins this process with a normal Employment Application through Human Resources. It was found that most employees did not meet the qualifications for a first line supervisor and could not be considered. This was due to a longevity requirement and an applicant must be employed with the department for a period of no less than three years, with no breaks in service. Considering this requirement and knowing there was a shortfall with experienced employees, the Administration had this clause changed. It was now required to have three total years of service, break in service or not. This change helped in the short term, but would eventually have a tremendous impact on morale for one simple reason. The

Administration did not revert back to the original requirement after the 'crisis' had passed, but kept the new wording in place. Over the next couple of years, the department had openings in the group of first line supervisors and there were promotions because of it. The problem came when there were employees, who had been separated from the department for several years, return and within six to twelve months, were promoted to a higher rank, even though there were those qualified and had remained loyal to the department. Several employees expressed their displeasure with this and some have left the department because of it. Some would argue, "Well they should have done better on the test." While others argued, "You shouldn't have had the opportunity to test in the first place." As you can see, the level of morale, which had begun to rise, dropped again and it would only get worse.

A couple of years ago, it was iterated by the Administration that Lieutenants and above were considered part of the Administration and would be assigned to (specialized) positions based on the needs of the department. Sergeants and below were not considered administration. If there was an opening in another division, other than the patrol division, or there was a specialized position that needed to be filled, interested candidates would submit a memorandum of interest and would be interviewed for the position. This method worked well and provided for a boost in morale by giving everyone a fair chance at another position and another opportunity. It inspired employees to do better, to remain enthusiastic with their current position, gave them pride in what they did, and it gave them the sense that they were valued. Research shows that employees with this mindset will go the extra mile and give the extra effort in order to ensure the success of the organization (Emotional Drivers of Employee Engagement, 2012, pg 3). Of course, with all good things, they come to an end. Recently, two specialized supervisory positions were filled by

subordinate first-line supervisors, without following the steps the Administration established. These positions, were not 'advertised'. There was no opportunity to submit a memorandum expressing one's interest and there was no opportunity to interview for the positions. The positions were filled by those employees (from the outside looking in), who were close to the Administration. Understanding, perception is a hard truth to overcome and if it is perceived the 'good ole boy' mentality has been used to fill positions and those 'good ole boys' are rewarded for their relationship with an administrator, once the truth is told, it will not be believed. Since these changes occurred three months ago, the department has seen nine people leave for greener pastures. Some of these departing employees, directly cited the lack of opportunity for advancement due to the change in the 'years of service' requirement and the lack of opportunity due to the Administration not following its own guidelines when it comes to employee assignment.

The problem lies in the desire for employees to expand on their value with the department. They want training and they want to be coached to gain skills in an attempt to increase this value (Lipman, Why Employee Development Is Important, Neglected And Can Cost You Talent, 2013). If employees feel as though they are appreciated, needed, and they feel the Administration truly cares for them, morale increases. This is accomplished in many different ways, but can be defeated with one decision, one action, or one inaction. More times than not, that one decision is like throwing a stone in a lake on a clear, calm morning. The surface of the water is like a mirror reflecting the surrounding landscape, the clouds, and the blue sky. As you stand there on the bank, you take it all in, and make the decision to throw the rock in your hand. The rock impacts the water, with a splash, and the ripples begin emanating from the center. The continuous

outward movement grows, until they strike the bank and then they bounce back toward the center. So can be said with employees of a department or organization. The employees are the surface of the water, mirroring back everything they see, do, and feel from the Administration. If they are content and the morale is high, the surface is like glass, but when someone makes a decision based more on personal feelings versus professional knowledge, the rock is thrown. You cannot bring the rock back to your hand. It is going to have an impact that will ripple out to everyone and sooner or later, those ripples will return to where they came from.

The Administration (Lieutenants and above):

Administrators have an effect on everything and they must realize their decisions can have a very positive impact to the employees of the organization. However, more times than not, the decisions made by the Administration look fantastic inside the front office, once they reach the employees, it would have been better to just take their first-born child. Decisions, directives, changes in operation usually come from the top. The “because I am the Chief” or “because I am the Sheriff” mentality is detrimental to the morale of the department. Logically, one would think, if you trust people with the rank you give them, you would trust their judgment to help and suggest ideas, changes, or methods to conduct business. What we see more times than not is an autocratic style of leadership, where decisions are made with little input from division leaders, first-line supervisors, or even the workers. You know, the ones actually doing the work! This is not to be considered that an autocratic style of leadership will not allow for a high level of morale, quite the contrary. In a law enforcement organization, there is a specific rank structure very similar to the military. The military, for the most part, is set up with an autocratic style of leadership and it is applicable to the law enforcement world, if used correctly. Administrators

should have respect for all employees, specifically subordinate personnel. Employees know there is a need for rules and procedures, but if they are fully explained, it will help do better if they know the reason for changes and/or rules (Leadership Styles: Autocratic Leadership, 2008).

Administrators should also realize that the “because I said so” response does not provide an answer to a question regarding a procedure change or policy revision. What the employee hears is simple, “Because you’re not worth explaining it to!” For the most part, law enforcement agencies do not hire idiots, but capable, mature men and women. Is it too much to ask that they are treated with respect and can be treated as though they are a viable part of the organization? Another departing employee was asked the reason he was leaving and he replied, “Because of “X-Decision”, if they would have just done, “Y-Decision”, I would not be leaving.” Another employee, standing close by, giggled and said, “You have introduced logic and sense where obviously logic and sense do not belong.”

As you can see, keeping the employees informed, treating them with respect, explaining the decisions and why they are made, will be a tremendous step forward with the morale of the departments or companies they work for.

First-Line Supervisors (Sergeants and Corporals):

These men and women are essentially the glue that holds the administrations and the ‘workers’ together. They are the ones in the trenches with the workers, doing the work, but also directing the work in accordance to the policies, directives, and procedures that are in place. If a worker doesn’t know what to do in a specific situation, it is up to the Sergeants and Corporals to set them in the right direction. They are also one of the most significant contributors to the morale

level of a department because, as stated earlier, they are “in the trenches with the workers”. Sergeants and Corporals should consider themselves the “Big Brother” or “Big Sister”, who mommy and daddy left in charge to take care of the siblings. They must be the one, who is willing to listen, willing to lend a hand in times of need, willing to encourage, willing to correct when needed, and willing to treat everyone equally and fairly. They should be the mentors of the department. The one who can take that new officer, fresh out of field training, and be willing to guide and mold him/her into the officer the department is wanting and needing. Along with that, must come the realization that molding these officers into what the department is wanting and needing, you are helping to shape the future of the department. The future leaders of the department and Sergeants and Corporals must be ready to accept that responsibility. On the other hand, the Administrations need to trust and allow these supervisors to simply do the job they were promoted to do. If correction is needed, then by all means, correct, with a logical explanation of course. If the supervisor is performing admirably and professionally, reward it and once again, with a logical explanation. A lower ranking administrator once told me, “The Patrol Sergeant is the best job in the department. You are able to go where you want, when you want. You are able to mold the new Deputies into the future leaders. And if you do the best job you can do, they will respect you for it.” Administrators should also be willing to mentor and teach the Sergeants and Corporals to be the future administrators of the department. Basing promotions and advancements on knowledge, service, and dedication, not on, friendship, status, or brown-nosing.

Front-Line Officer:

You are the face of your department! Sure, the citizens see the Chief or the Sheriff on the television or hear them on the radio, but when the citizens cry for help, YOU are who they meet and see in person. The officer is one person, who can affect every citizen on a street, every citizen in a neighborhood, and every citizen in the community. It is important that officers remain positive and keep the morale high. This is apparent when an officer is having a bad day and he/she is abrasive or rude to the public. We all know when this happens, dispatch is calling the Sergeant or the Corporal on the radio, in order to provide them with a phone number to the citizen the officer just finished with. When the officer treats the citizens with respect, with kindness, and goes the extra mile, we rarely hear about it. When that officer performs in that manner he/she has made a lasting impression, which will endure for years to come. The officer is the one who can make a difference with the public, certainly not the Administration. Most citizens could stand beside the Chief or the Sheriff in a grocery store and have no idea who they are. Have that officer, who went the extra mile to help, go to the grocery store, that citizen will go out of their way to speak to him/her to just thank them or just to say hello.

Administrators should realize the importance of the Front-Line Officer and the image they are portraying. Understanding, it is sometimes difficult, keep them happy, keep them informed, and you will keep them engaged in the best interest of the department. The Front-Line Officer, the Sergeant, or the Corporal are the “surface of the water” and a reflection of you. Keep the water smooth and reflective like a mirror. Don’t throw the stone, without first analyzing, and with proper thought. After all that, if you must throw the stone, throw little ones, not just one big one.

..And Joe's Department did what?:

This question has been seen several times in this paper and now we'll learn the answer to it.

After Joe's Dad died, the Administration did, nothing. There were a few, who expressed their condolences, but essentially the desertion of the department has made a lasting impression on Joe. There was a brief email, by the chief administrator, expressing his condolences, but nothing from any of the higher ranking administrators. Joe continued performing his job and on his first day back from bereavement leave, he was in the classroom teaching new recruits. Joe wasn't taught to stop or to give up. He was taught to face adversity head on and defeat it. Joe's Dad endured it his entire life and he passed this onto his children. Be dedicated and give it your best. That's what Joe did, he remained focused and dedicated to the department, even though he felt like he didn't matter, he pushed forward because he knew his Dad would expect no less from him.

Less than three weeks later, Joe, who was taking some time off at the end of the year, received a phone call from his supervisor, who asked him if he had read his emails. Joe usually read his emails in the morning and then in the afternoon on his days off, but had not checked them on this afternoon. Joe told his supervisor that he had not and his supervisor's voice dropped and he said, "Well, we need to talk." Joe's supervisor began to tell him about the promotions that had been given and even though Joe tried for a promotion to Lieutenant, he didn't get it. [Joe didn't expect to, there were two administrators on the five person interview board, who made sure Joe didn't receive a comparable score to the other three. Joe knew the way the scoring was set up, the lowest and the highest score are eliminated, so two low scores would essentially knock him out of contention.] His supervisor continued and told Joe that Joe's Deputy, who had recently filled a position that had been vacant for two years, was going to be promoted to Sergeant. This is when

the supervisor became very quiet. He went on to tell Joe, he was being reassigned to Patrol and that Joe's Deputy would takeover Joe's previous position. Joe was floored. Joe had been assigned to the Division for almost four years. He had received many "attaboys" and Letters of Commendation from the Chief Administrator and the Administration. To have this happen so soon after his Dad's death was a tremendous blow. Joe's supervisor went on to tell him that he was going to tell him at the right time, but an email had been sent out, by the Administration, listing all the changes and promotions, and Joe's reassignment was included in it. The email arrived before Joe's supervisor called him, but Joe had not checked it. An email? All Joe could think was, "This is appreciation?" "This is how they show respect for dedication?" As you can see, while Joe was still bent over from the belly-blow of losing his Dad, his department kicked him square in the teeth, without as much as a thank you. Was Joe upset? Absolutely! Did he feel betrayed? Absolutely! There was no explanation given for the change. There was no reason for the change and to this day, no one has offered to explain this to Joe. There have been some, who have offered their impression of why, but nothing from the Administration to explain why. Life goes on for Joe, it is business as usual. Joe is still dedicated to the department because he swore to an Oath and believes in the Code of Ethics. Joe still does his job, does what is expected of him, and will always go the extra mile. Not for the Administration, but for the citizens where he serves. Recently, there was a position available on a task force and Joe was one of the most qualified for the position. Joe was perfectly content where he was now assigned, but that part of Joe that wants to do more, wants to give it everything, was pushing him to submit an interest in the position. One thing kept him from it, the lack of trust and faith in the Administration to do the right thing, when it matters the most. Joe is still doing what he does and having fun doing it. Though everyone knows the situation and believes he would be bitter about it, Joe still

encourages his subordinates and shows an interest in how they do their job. He wants to make them the best they can be and wants to be a part of mentoring the future leaders of the department. Though the Administration appears not to believe in Joe, Joe believes in the ones he supervises. Joe will always hold his head up because Joe is proud he has the opportunity to be the “surface of the water” and to reflect the good he sees. Sometimes the ripples emanate from the center or the wind blows across the surface, scattering the reflection. Joe is still there.

...I am Joe.

Bad things do happen; how I respond to them defines my character and the quality of my life. I can choose to sit in perpetual sadness, immobilized by the gravity of my loss, or I can choose to rise from the pain and treasure the most precious gift I have - life itself. ~ Walter Anderson

Life is a series of experiences, each one of which makes us bigger, even though sometimes it is hard to realize this. For the world was built to develop character, and we must learn that the setbacks and grieves which we endure help us in our marching onward. ~ Henry Ford

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