

Organization Theory and Change

Big changes are coming to North Platte!! The City of North Platte has gone through a culture change in the past 5 or so years. The city is growing, new industry, shopping, and opportunities are coming to North Platte. This much-needed change and growth for North Platte is exciting for our area.

As the city has started to grow and expand, the city departments, including the police department, have also been faced with the fact it is time to grow and expand. It is the mission of the North Platte Police Department to “preserve the peace and order and to enforce the law, ordinances, and rulings of the State and City” (NPPD). To uphold our mission and provide the highest quality service to the city, all employees and officers within the police department must be committed to the mission every day they are at work. It is time the police department invests in the employees and officers we have and work to recruit new officers.

Staffing shortages are a nationwide problem and North Platte is no different. Retaining current employees has also become a major issue in the recent past. Retention has recently been blamed on low wages however the culture and low morale within the department have created a divide among employees that have made it difficult to keep senior officers. Our department has many new officers and is very young regarding years of service. This has created challenges for supervisors and trainers as we all navigate generational differences.

During a recent meeting of field training officers, one Investigator commented our department has lost its sense of family. During the pandemic we stopped doing roll call at the beginning of shift, shifts weren't allowed to intermingle at work or away from work, and

divisions were locked to other divisions, so employees were no longer able to spend time with those that weren't on their specific shifts.

It is my recommendation the North Platte Police Department develop a mentorship program. The purpose of this program will not only be to welcome our recruits and mentor them through the field training process but also to continue to mentor them until they have settled into the department. This will help senior officers to invest in the department, ensure positive working relationships, and grow the department into an organization we are all proud of.

Chief Morrison with the Carlsbad Police Department had some valuable information about holding each other accountable. Chief Morrison said, "at the end of the day, I'm going to have you back and you're going to have my back, and we're not going to let each other down". (Morrison). This is the mentality that mentor officers need to take to ensure success not only for this program but overall success for the department and the city. To recruit and retain officers, we must foster a more welcoming, family-oriented department.

As we learned through the Multicom case, times are changing, and employees cherish time off and family time more than ever before (Morgan). Organizations must adapt to new generations. This mentor program is a start to the North Platte Police Department adapting to the needs and desires of officers.

The mentorship program will begin at the first contact with the prospective employee. As Chief Morrison talked about, we must adapt to the marketplace. We must adapt our focus to recruits and realize applicants of this generation need and want a connection from the

beginning. Recruitment officers will obtain contact information for the applicant and keep in contact with the application throughout the application process. The recruitment officers will keep the applicants apprised of important deadlines and testing dates. These officers will check in on the applicants and make sure they have what they need to be successful on testing day and with their oral interviews.

Once an applicant has been hired on, making them feel welcome and a part of the family is the next step. Recruits will be spending a lot of time with their FTOs and while FTOs are great mentors, it's important to involve other officers who can be positive role models for them throughout their careers.

The new generation of employees tends to not stay in one profession or at one organization for their entire careers. Part of the mentorship program will be securing the future of the North Platte Police Department by everyone knowing the vision of the department and being a part of the vision. Conversations with recruits found that they share the same core value of being in policing, their desire to help people (PERF).

Mentors will get to know their recruit; learn and understand their goals for their career, learn about their family, and what brought them to our agency and/or North Platte if they came to us from outside the city. They will be available to listen to them when they face struggles and provide them with whatever resources possible to help them achieve their goals. Their mentor will be there to encourage them to participate in department functions outside of work and bring an overall sense of family back to the department.

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The goal of this program is not only to welcome new officers but encourage both new officers and current officers to invest in the department and more importantly invest in each other. The officers to be selected for the mentorship officers need to be leaders in the department. They need to have the desire to improve the culture within the North Platte Police Department and the patience to work with new officers.

Remembering all officers in this profession share the common value to help people, the mentorship program will be helpful for senior officers to understand the younger officers and foster a more welcoming atmosphere for the new generation that is the future of the North Platte Police Department.

With all the growth in North Platte, our agency is at the forefront of a challenge we have not faced before. We are struggling to fill positions for an already short-staffed agency and the large turnover and low morale has made the process to not only retain current officers but also encourage new officers to come to our department extremely difficult. Changing the culture and improving morale must start with all employees in the department.

I like the poem "There's a Hole in my Sidewalk". Four days you walk down the same sidewalk, following in the same hole. Finally on day 5, you learn to walk down a different sidewalk. Realizing the hole is not going to move, it is time to take a different approach to encouraging a different outcome. Creating a mentorship program is walking down a different sidewalk to promote a better outcome. An outcome to foster create leaders and bring back our sense of family.

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