

TO: Police Chiefs

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RE: Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities & Threats
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There is a lot going on in the Law Enforcement profession, outside influences, reviews by the governing body, calls for the defunding of police, and demands for better training. Many of these criticisms and demands are problematic. Police leaders are continually having to balance the need to keep the members of their community safe, preserve their rights, and protect the wellness of their officers. Recent calls for the defunding of the police will only decrease the resources that are needed to meet the minimum state-mandated training requirements. With fewer officers to answer calls for service, emergency responses will be delayed, and the citizens of your community will suffer.

Change is coming, and leaders need to prepare for these challenges. These changes are going to be disruptive, and we cannot underestimate the courage that it will take to navigate these difficult times. Innovation, preparation, and solid leadership practices will be needed.¹

In the very near future, you may find yourself in a difficult situation; you may have a mayor, the governing body, or a group of concerned citizens questioning the effectiveness of your department. Demands may be made of the governing body, and your department's operational and training procedures may come under scrutiny.

During my tenure as chief of police, two outside agencies conducted inquiries into our agency's operational procedures, the Civil Rights Division of the U.S. Department of Justice, and the Local Budget Review Program of the New Jersey Department of the Treasury (LGBR). The U.S. Department of Justice (DOJ) was conducting an inquiry due to an alleged civil rights violation. The DOJ was concerned about policy development, training, and accountability. Our agency staff spent numerous hours collecting data on arrests, training records, policies, procedures, community policing projects, and internal affairs files. Fortunately, the results of the inquiry were that our agency acted within the law and policy during the event. The New Jersey Local Government Budget Review team conducted a thorough review of our agency's services. Their mission was to find savings and efficiencies without compromising the delivery

¹ Anthony, Scott., "Leaders Must Have the Courage to Choose the Future." MIT Sloan Management Review. June 2020. <https://sloanreview.mit.edu/article/leaders-must-have-the-courage-to-choose-the-future/>

of services to the public. The auditors scrutinized our police operations, training initiatives, and budget requests. Many of the same questions the DOJ asked were asked again by the LGBR, focusing on training, policies, operational procedures, accountability, and budgets. One of the critical lessons learned from these experiences was the need to conduct an agency review, and then develop an action plan that would meet our community's needs and enhance our agency's operational effectiveness.

Police leaders should get ahead of this and conduct their own review and correct or address any issues you discover with complete transparency before someone from the outside comes in and turns your agency upside down. This process will most likely be difficult, and you need to be brutally honest with yourself and your agency staff. But the benefits will be helpful, and it will show that under your leadership, you are committed to your oath of office, which is performing to the best of your abilities at all times.

The one process that I am familiar with is simple but highly effective. There are other approaches to this process but do the research on them first to determine their effectiveness.

Conducting a SWOT Analysis is used to assess your organization's current state of affairs and to help with developing a strategic plan that will move your agency forward.

- Strengths – what do you do well, what resources do you have, and what do you believe are your greatest strengths? Some questions you may want to ask yourself and your staff.
 1. *Have we enacted measures and programs that have helped us build trust with our community members? If so, can we easily identify them?*
 2. *Does our training meet and exceed all mandatory training requirements?*
- Weaknesses – what could you improve, where do you have fewer resources than other agencies, what are others likely to see as a weakness? Some questions that you may want to ask yourself and your staff.
 1. *Do we have a high number of outstanding Internal Affairs complaints?*
 2. *Do we have policies that address racial profiling and implicit biases?*
 3. *If we have body-worn cameras, do we have a system in place to review video recordings beyond “random” reviews? Do we have “triggering” mechanisms to evaluate use of force incidents or injury incidents?*
- Opportunities – what opportunities are open to you, what trends can you take advantage of, and how can you turn your strengths into opportunities? Some questions that you may want to ask yourself and your staff.

1. *How can we create a training program that not only teaches officers that they are required to intervene during the use of unlawful force, but also how can we make it part of our agency's culture?*
 2. *Can we build a relationship with our community to show them the difficulties officers are confronted with when using force? Dynamic, unpredictable, and evaluated on a case by case basis.*
- Threats – what threats could harm you, and what weaknesses expose your operation and reputation? Some questions that you may want to ask yourself and your staff.
 1. *Do we have an up to date use of force policy (UOF) reflecting the Attorney General's directive regarding chokeholds?*
 2. *Have we provided strong policy guidance to officers on how to respond to those calling for a change in the criminal justice system?*
 3. *Have we provided detailed policy guidance on how officers can be held accountable for offensive comments on their personal social media platforms?*
 4. *Are our policies accurate with respect to the terms "shall," "may," and "will," and do officers understand the difference?*

When going through this process, do not forget to think about the concept of "Linked Decisions." For example, if I cut back on Use of Force Training and our agency's officers only meet the minimum requirements, can we expect positive outcomes. Thinking through high-risk situations requires constant training. Making good decisions on using the appropriate amount of force is a skill, and if we fail to practice that skill, our actions will suffer.

Recent events, civil unrest, and calls for change serve as clues to the potential challenges you, your officers, and your organization may face. It is unknown what reform measures may come to fruition. Monitoring the ongoing dialogue surrounding training, professionalism, use of force, bias, and other critical issues can help a leader prepare for what is coming next. Ideally, police leaders should be continually scanning diverse publications and media broadcasts, by doing this, a leader will recognize the issues and prepare for the rapid changes that appear to be coming to the criminal justice system.

Once you have completed your SWOT Analysis develop an action plan. Focus on training programs that will assist your agency in developing a professional reputation.

Tabletop Exercise:

Think about this! If one of your officers came to work, a good officer who does his/her job well is forced into a situation where they need to use deadly force because they are in fear for their lives and the

subject is unarmed, would you be able to explain what you and your agency staff have done to prepare for this type of critical incident? Questions will be asked, and you need to be prepared for the difficult days. Remember, you will not rise to the occasion; you will rise to the level of your preparation and training.

Examples of Strengths:

- Excellent community support, most of the community respects and appreciates the work that officers do on their behalf; they are our allies
- Community outreach - engaged in an effective Problem-Oriented Policing or Community Oriented Policing program
- Engaged in programs with your local, middle and high schools
- Excellent working relationship with local leaders, scheduled meetings and an agenda
- Positive working relationship with your governing body and the mayor
- Practical mission and value statements that the agency adheres to
- Conducting surveys of officer's needs as it relates to training and equipment.
- Complete and thorough reviews of your agency's Internal Affairs Files
- Review past and pending lawsuits, workers' compensation claims, and injuries to others
- Personnel selection and retention
- Officer accountability
- Succession planning
- Trained and prepared to conduct press releases
- Adequate IT infrastructure
- Professional police culture

Examples of Weaknesses:

- Minimal, stagnant training programs – little or no policy guidance
- Lack of a POP of Community Policing Program
- No interaction with your local school system
- Outdated policy manuals
- Budget
- Losing the ability to recruit and retain employees through proven strategies
- Outdated or lack of digital technology
- The Status Quo is rewarded – typical government problem
- Expectations of supervisors are lacking
- Lack of or poor Strengths – see “Strength” list above
- The inability of the organization to adapt to social change

Examples of Opportunities:

- Community Crisis
- Community Outreach
- Favorable factors, good and continued communication with community groups
- Culture change – from complacency to innovational
- Training
- Grants
- Positive media
- Develop operational excellence

Examples of Threats:

- Community Crisis, civil unrest
- Natural Disaster
- Unique Critical Infrastructure
- Political Change or Political Pressure
- Consolidation
- Fiscal Crisis
- Inability to recruit and or retain personnel
- Ineffective leadership
- Unforeseen “Negative” Event – (shooting or use of force incident)
- Legacy thinking – It isn’t your money, no one ever got fired for doing nothing, it has always been done this way
- Continue to reward mediocrity
- Excessive Liability Exposure
- Uncertainty of regulatory laws being promulgated that may reduce services

Resources:

<https://sloanreview.mit.edu/article/leaders-must-have-the-courage-to-choose-the-future/>

Examples of Strategic Plans:

<https://www.amherstnh.gov/sites/amherstnh/files/uploads/apdstrategicplanfinalrevision2.pdf>

<https://www.cambridgema.gov/~media/Files/policedepartment/FiveYearStrategicPlanMarch2017>

<https://creately.com/diagram/example/iwhs8yx6/Houston%20Police%20Department>

<https://www.cityofroxboro.com/home/showdocument?id=10989>