

# The Role of Labor Management in Law Enforcement

## Voiceover

00:00

This is *The Beat*—a podcast series that keeps you in the know about the latest community policing topics facing our nation.

## Melissa Bradley

00:08

Hello and welcome. My name is Melissa Bradley, and on behalf of the COPS Office, I'd like to introduce Deputy Chief Tim Becker of the Columbus Police Department, who is here today to talk about policy decisions within his department that involve both labor and management. Chief, welcome.

## Deputy Chief Tim Becker

00:25

Thank you.

## Bradley

00:26

So, can you talk a little bit about what steps the department has taken to improve recruiting and retention, especially when it comes to building a diverse workplace?

## Becker

00:37

Yes, this is one of our most important issues in Columbus, driven all the way from the mayor on down. We have a lot of us that are very committed to the concept of it. Experiencing the reality of the getting the diversity wants has been a bigger challenge than we'd like, and I think a lot of agencies face that.

In the last year, we've undergone a lot of changes to our hiring process to try to bring better diversity. To start with, we hired two different outside consultants to come and examine all of our processes that we did. Both these consultants had experience in other fields of recruiting unique workers. For instance, one had a very successful campaign for getting males to go into the occupation of nursing. So we're looking for some paradigm shifts in our practices, and so we brought these agencies in. They did full exams for us and gave us some recommendations. And then one led us through our marketing and advertising strategy for our last session up to our police test that we recently gave. Some of the things that we did as a result of this that were different is we use social media a lot more in our advertising. Normally, in the past, we used mainstream media, television ads. We couldn't afford to do a whole lot of those often. But we had gone to a lot of newspaper ads and we really got away from that this time. We found they weren't being very successful. One of things we use is Pandora, and we use Facebook, and in there, you can target the receivers so all those ads were only targeted to the groups that we were trying to reach.

We have a lot—we were blessed with a very high turnout for our hiring test, and we weren't worried about getting overall numbers, though the white male applicants come whether we advertise to them or not. We get plenty of those very qualified candidates. But we're looking to reach the areas who don't generally consider law enforcement as a career. So part of that—we held three expos at our academy. And with these expos, we targeted our ads to these different groups to try to bring them information about what they can expect from a career in law enforcement and specifically with the Columbus Division of Police. We had about 1,000 people sign up and about 900 people attend these four-hour sessions. And in there, we walked them through what the academy is like, what they should expect from a physical fitness standpoint, what they should expect from an academic standpoint, and then what to expect from people on the job. And we brought in a lot of our officers that fit the diversity category and had less than five years of experience on. So they were younger and could relate with our applicant-age people and tell them what their experiences have been so far. Right now, we walked all the way through that process and then we gave a test, and we're awaiting the test results right now, and we'll see if it had a change or a good impact on what we did, but we really are rethinking everything we do and recruiting.

### **Bradley**

*03:33*

What role does the union play?

### **Becker**

*03:35*

The union, I will say, has been kind of neutral for us in the recruiting. We know, historically, that our biggest recruiters are our own employees. So we've been trying to teach our own employees how to recruit better when they see somebody on a run, on a call, somebody in their community, their church, they think mirrors the core values of our agency, that they start encouraging them, especially with females. It's been hard to get females into the law enforcement field. And despite having a female police chief, we're still struggling to get the numbers we'd like to have. Females have been very successful in our agency. We'd like to grow that population.

### **Bradley**

*04:16*

Let's shift gears a little bit and talk about improving officer mental and physical wellness. What are some of the department's recent initiatives and, again, what role does the union play in those initiatives?

### **Becker**

*04:29*

We've partnered a lot more with the union on this instance. Often the union knows of issues with our members before the chain of command or administration knows. If there's alcohol or gambling issues or maybe prescription drug abuse, those have been some major things we have faced in our agency. And they often know through their members before we do. So we've been trying to coordinate our efforts to get these people the help they need. So there's been a lot of push on that. We started a peer-assistance

team just within the last couple years, and last year they had almost 1,000 contacts where people reached out or they recognized. And these are just officers in the various ranks but mostly at the officer rank—employees that received some training and they know how to recognize symptoms, they know what resources are available to point people to a type of counseling or resources they need—and that’s been very successful. So far we collaborate with the city’s employee assistance program, we’ve put out mandatory training videos on officer wellness that touch on everything from mental, spiritual, and physical health, all the resources we have. We’ve increased our collaborative with city talking about physical fitness opportunities. And there’s now free classes, everything from yoga to weight lifting to cardio almost every week that are available to our employees to go to. We’ve added additional fitness facilities within our agency to try and encourage that use and just get people to start thinking about that.

### **Bradley**

06:06

Great! Well, Chief, thank you so much for your time and expertise.

### **Becker**

06:10

You’re welcome.

### **Voiceover: *The Beat* Exit**

06:12

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### **Voiceover: Disclaimer**

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