



Report on the 1st National Joint Union-Management Executive Symposium

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Background

The role of police unions and labor relations in law enforcement agencies are topics that have received little attention in the literature. One study reported that in the past 33 years, there have been only 19 published items—scholarly articles, books, book chapters, or reports by government agencies or private nonprofit groups—on police unions in the United States (Walker, 2008). The study also reports that “the neglect of police unions has seriously impeded understanding of American policing, particularly with respect to basic police management, innovation and reform, police-community relations, and police accountability” (Walker, 2008).

Not only have there been few articles written about police unions, but many of those published do not portray unions in a favorable manner. Unions have been described anecdotally as interfering with management’s ability to innovate. There have also been additional claims of unions hindering management’s ability to deploy officers in the field, to effectively discipline officers, and thoroughly and fairly investigate officer wrongdoing. Even fewer articles discuss the positive role unions can and do play in working with management to solve problems, implement change, make reforms, and handle crises. Fewer still are initiatives that attempt to engage both police union leaders and managers in efforts to work together to effectively address challenges that confront them both.

In the late 1990s, the School of Criminal Justice (SCJ) and the School of Labor and Industrial Relations (SLIR) of Michigan State University (MSU) partnered together in an attempt to bring a union-management focus to implement community policing in Michigan. Under a grant to establish a Regional Community Policing Institute, SCJ and SLIR identified several departments that agreed to discuss implementation of community policing in a union-management forum. A number of facilitated conversations took place between union and management leaders in these departments, but in the end they agreed that implementation of community policing was not something they wanted to engage in jointly at that time. Several factors may have influenced these decisions, including a lack of trust between union and management, lack of union familiarity with the community policing concept, less than optimal management support for the collective bargaining agreement, and a lack of understanding of union roles and responsibilities. Although the effort was eventually shelved, it did provide information that suggested that union and management leaders desired many of the same things for their work and in their workplaces (Polzin and Brockman, 1999) and that they might respond more favorably to efforts that applied a union-management approach to critical issues and concerns that affected them.

Though it seemed appropriate at the time, linking joint union-management cooperation and community policing might have limited the willingness of police management and union leaders to carefully examine the advantages and disadvantages of each concept separately. Each concept has considerable value—potentially—for both police unions and management in helping them to effectively address needs of their respective constituents. However, the concept of a joint labor-management organizational change process was contrary to their experience of organizational change being unilaterally imposed. The thought of working together to solve problems in such a way that the needs of both parties were addressed also seemed to be a far-fetched possibility, given the experiences that many had had previously. It is also possible that neither the time nor the issue was ripe for a joint union-management approach.

Conceptualization of the Symposium

Scroll forward 10 years to 2008 when once again MSU's Schools of Labor and Industrial Relations and Criminal Justice partnered, along with the Office of Community Oriented Policing Services (the COPS Office), U.S. Department of Justice, to sponsor the 1st National Joint Police Union-Management Executive Symposium. The symposium operated on the premise that the critical issues facing police organizations and the future of policing cannot be effectively addressed by union or management leaders working in isolation. Further, the symposium sponsors articulated a belief that by working together on these issues, union and management leaders can build a stronger police organization that serves the needs of all of their constituents.

The idea for the symposium grew out of the experience of two of the event's organizers, Michael Polzin and Ron Delord, who had collaborated on two reports that the COPS Office published in 2006.¹ Polzin and Delord had been conducting executive development programs for police union leaders² for several years at Michigan State University and concluded that many of the problems and challenges police union leaders articulated were of the type that could not be addressed, let alone solved, by union leaders themselves. Moreover, they saw that the skills union leaders and police management needed to be able to work effectively together were not likely to be found in the toolkits of either.

Purpose and Structure of the Symposium

The symposium was designed to offer participants the most current information on several critical issues facing police organizations. It also included strategies to address these critical issues jointly, build the skills needed for police union and management leaders to effectively confront them together, and then practice applying the tools that would help them when they returned to their agencies.

¹Police Labor-Management Relations (Volumes I and II): A Guide for Implementing Change, Making Reforms, and Handling Crises for Management and Union Leaders (Delord, 2006 and Polzin and Delord, 2006)

²The Police Union Executive Leadership Program

The weeklong symposium was divided into nine half-day segments. The opening segment gave participants an opportunity to get to know each other by discussing, in small groups, the challenges that each faced as either police union or management leaders. The four issue-based content segments focused on the future of policing, health care, and the implications for bargaining, work-family issues, and recruitment and retention strategies. The remaining four skill-building segments emphasized effective negotiation and problem solving using interest-based approaches. They also addressed topics on leading and managing change, building and maintaining an effective union-management relationship, and creating joint strategies to address critical issues. Each issue-based segment consisted of a presentation, followed by a discussion of the implications for law enforcement agencies. Each skill-building segment focused on presentations and activities that helped participants practice applying the skills introduced. Sessions were designed to engage participants by encouraging them to discuss topics with each other and with the presenters. The Police Union Executive Leadership Program utilized this interaction/engagement approach with much success, as participants often cited that they learned a great deal from each other's insights and experiences.

Symposium Participants

Forty-one participants attended the symposium from Michigan, Texas, Nevada, Arizona, Wisconsin, Ontario, Australia, and Turkey. A little more than one-third of the participants were from the management ranks, so there was a lot of opportunity for candid and frank conversations that represented the interests of each of their constituents. While some departments were represented by union and management leaders, symposium organizers had hoped for more and even offered substantial discounts in the registration fee to help in this effort. However, participants were still encouraged to attend, even if their counterparts could not, as it was believed that they would benefit from the sessions nevertheless.

Content of the Symposium

An implicit goal of the symposium was to get management and union leaders to work together to gain a broader understanding of several key issues facing law enforcement agencies by being exposed to a wide range of perspectives. By doing this, it hoped that union and management leaders would gain an appreciation for the benefits that accrue from working together. To help achieve this goal, participants were seated at 5-person round tables with both union and management represented at each table. Participants were instructed not to sit with people from their own department.

To set expectations in discussions, participants were given a set of ground rules. The symposium organizers thought it unlikely that any discussion would become heated to the point that facilitators would have to intervene, but they were offered simply as a reminder of standards of decorum. Organizers hoped that this would help to facilitate open and honest discussions. Following is a summary of the sessions by day:

Group Discussion – Challenge Census (Monday morning)

In the opening segment, groups were asked to identify and discuss the challenges they faced in performing their respective roles. Since this was the first session of the symposium, organizers wanted to more fully engage the participants early on. From previous experience in working with union and union-management groups, it is known that getting them to talk with each other about what they know best is an effective way to engage people. Groups were given about 1 hour to discuss challenges and list them on flip chart paper. Then, each group presented the challenges on the items from their respective lists that had not been reported by a previous group. A list of all the challenges that they cited was prepared for reference throughout the week. The scheduled speakers took those challenges into consideration when they made their presentations, and the participants received a copy for their own use once they returned to their home agencies.

Participants listed many challenges. The list below summarizes the ones that were most commonly brought up.

- » **Recruiting** sufficient numbers of qualified candidates (cited by both union and management):
 - › Complexities of recruiting workforces that more effectively mirror the demographics of the communities they served³
 - › Difficulties caused by adding requirements to hiring standards⁴
 - › Lack of people leaving the military due to the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan
 - › Problems in trying to attract diverse candidates
- » **Budget concerns and constraints, along with their impact on:**
 - › Collective bargaining
 - › Health care
 - › Pensions
- » **The process of civilianizing some police work traditionally done by sworn officers**
- » **Trust issues**
- » **Internal relations, including labor-management relations**
- » **External relations.**

³By doing this they had hoped to strengthen community relations and help to more effectively serve their constituents.

⁴Such as the need for an associate or bachelor's degree.

In addition to capturing the key challenges that many participants faced, the Challenge Census served to connect participants with each other as they found that their problems and challenges were not unique to them or their departments. It is interesting to note that the international participants found this to be the case as well.

Panel Presentation – The Future of Policing (Monday evening)

Peter Remfrey, secretary of the Police Association of New South Wales, Australia, presented interesting information about the police promotion system in Australia and its role in retaining sworn officers. Remfrey pointed out the problems associated with using promotion as a primary vehicle to retain officers. He cited figures showing how 5,000 constables were eligible for 260 sergeant positions per year, how 2,000+ sergeants were eligible for 65 inspector positions per year, and how 600 inspectors were eligible for approximately 20 superintendent positions per year. Consequently, he pointed out that 80–85 percent of the workforce will never benefit from this promotion system. In response, they developed an alternative retention strategy that provided a method of progression based on changes to the pay structure. It created overlaps between pay levels that had traditionally been associated with promotion to a higher rank. To qualify for a promotion in this alternative retention strategy, there were still merit-based as well as seniority requirements. However, there were no limits on the number who could achieve the higher pay grade.⁵

Next, Mark Alley, chief of the Lansing (Michigan) Police Department (LPD), presented information on strategies the LPD employed to increase diversity within the ranks of its sworn officers. The problem he was responding to was underrepresentation of females, African-Americans, and Hispanics as determined by recent census data. He further noted that the department was entering an era where nearly half of the sworn personnel had less than 5 years experience. Moreover, within 10 years, more than a third of the sworn workforce would be eligible to retire.

Alley described some things that the Lansing Police Department is doing to recruit now and several years from now. The LPD is actively engaged in public schools as a means to exert a positive influence on young people as well as to build some familiarity with and enthusiasm for careers in law enforcement. Since such a large percentage of the LPD is eligible to retire in the next 10 years, this strategy has the potential to aid in recruiting.

The final panelist, Ron Delord, president of the Combined Law Enforcement Associations of Texas, spoke about “the Perfect Storm” pertaining to recruitment. First, he cited the changing demographics of the applicant pool who do not seem to be interested in engaging in police work, even though wages and benefits are comparable to that received in the private sector. He went on to describe how the recruitment and selection process itself was a deterrent for some candidates, with the maze of civil service rules and regulations, collective bargaining agreements, testing sites, interviews, physical exams, and long delays in notification and hiring. Today, the applicants expect user-friendly web sites, access to comparative information about wages and benefits, expedited hiring processes, instant communication and information, and a work environment that is flexible with rapid promotions.

⁵Remfrey reported that currently attrition rates remain between 4 and 5 percent, which shows no increase since the new system was put into effect.

Delord described the rigidity in human resource practices that also hinder recruitment and retention. For example, one hindering factor was the refusal to offer child care even though police work is a 24/7 operation. It was further hindered by the absence of flex-time programs and job sharing that would add to the quality of life of some officers, especially those with families. Moreover, the difficulty that stay-at-home parents have in returning to their jobs after extended leaves is problematic. He offered several suggestions that might help to reduce the crisis. First, he encouraged both union and management to join together to address the crisis since it is a problem that affects both and since unions need to be part of enduring and effective solutions. Next, he proposed to widen the pool of candidates by hiring former officers and retired officers, creating part-time and flex-time jobs, and reviewing what work is required to be done by sworn officers. Finally, he suggested that departments modernize the recruitment process by adopting business models on quality of life and review what practices, policies, and traditions are hampering the profession.

This panel presentation was moderated by Kim Lawrence, a faculty member of the School of Criminal Justice.

The Future of Policing – Questions for the Panelists (Monday evening)

Following the panel presentation, participants were divided into small groups to discuss what they had heard and to raise questions for further clarification. The questions reflected concerns that were widely shared among participants. They wanted to know about the following:

- » How to address recruitment goals, especially when trying to match the demographics of the community
- » How to retain officers when opportunities for promotion, and pay increases, were limited to a fairly small percentage of the force at one time
- » How to manage department needs when municipal budgets were being cut
- » What the future holds for health care and pension benefits
- » What the wisdom is of increasing requirements that applicants for law enforcement jobs must meet in order to be seriously considered.

Presentation – Health Care and the Fork in the Road (Tuesday morning)

Keith Groty, emeritus professor in the School of Labor and Industrial Relations, led a very informative and lively session on the future of health care in the United States. He provided data that showed recent trends in health care costs and stated that they have been rising at a rate of about 15 percent per year, and are likely to double within the next 5 years. He explained that in the United States, more than 15 percent, or \$1.67 trillion, of Gross Domestic Product (GDP) is spent on health care—more than it spends on food, housing, and automobiles. It was further interesting to note that no other country spends more than 10 percent of its GDP on health care. Some of the causes for this include:

reduction in authorization requirements that has led to more utilization of services; excess hospital capacity but a need to cover fixed costs; a shortage of nurses and other specialists, driving up wage rates; a disproportionate number of physician specialists who tend to order more expensive procedures; and escalating prescription costs. He went on to describe how large claims drive up health care costs—claims that result from neglect or previous conditions before they became serious or life threatening, and a relatively unhealthy lifestyle that impairs health among many people. Managed care, which was hoped to have a positive impact on costs, instead desensitized the consumer to the real costs of health care. Participants recognized from their own experience how rising health care costs impact their municipalities and ultimately their own ability to obtain wage and benefit increases.

Groty described a number of the cost containment approaches that have been employed over the years which have not contained costs in the long run and have resulted mostly in an adverse impact on employees who are covered by health care plans. These include a decline in coverage, a reduction of benefits, costs being passed on to the consumer, and retiree plans or dependent coverage being eliminated. He stated that employers have exhausted the cost savings provided by traditional approaches and that permanent changes need to be found and implemented in order to bring about a lasting impact. Some ideas were: change user behavior; form employee coalitions to influence the health care delivery market; improve the health status of consumers; fight waste; prevent medical errors and fraud; and link consumer behavior to compensation outcomes. He also urged that consumers advocate for what he termed “quality medicine” outcomes that include: electronic medical records, evidence-based medicine, centers of excellence, and widespread education of patients on how to effectively utilize the health care system and select a health plan appropriate for their needs.

Participant responses to the health care presentation

After hearing the presentation, participants had an opportunity to share, in small groups, the concerns that they believed were most important for their constituents. They then reported these concerns to the large group. The following were popular concerns among the participants:

- » The cost of health care
 - › Which also had implications on wages and benefits, including out-of-pocket costs for individuals
- » Coverage
 - › Not only what is covered but also who
 - › The impact of the rising financial burden on municipalities and the decisions they made about continuing coverage for retirees
- » The need for a greater focus on utilization practices

- » The need for much stronger emphasis on wellness
 - › Which might also include incorporating wellness expectations and activities into daily work life
- » Fear that personal choice might be limited if there was more government intervention or the creation of a single-payer system.⁶

Skill-Building Session #1: Jointly Leading Change in the Police Workplace (Tuesday evening)

This was the first of several sessions devoted to helping union and management participants learn to effectively work together to address some of the changes that affected them both. In this segment, John Beck, associate professor and director of the Labor Education Program at Michigan State, provided an overview of the type of change process that is most effective when working in a unionized environment. He adapted information from Kotter's "Eight Stages of Successfully Creating Major Organizational Change":

1. Establish a sense of urgency for the need for change.
2. Create the coalition that will guide the effort; in a unionized workplace, this would include representatives from both union and management so that the key constituencies have representation.
3. Develop a vision and strategy and question both the mission and how it is to be accomplished. Consider the intended and unintended consequences.
4. Communicate the vision for change, asking first WHO needs to hear WHAT WHEN?
5. Empower broad-based action toward the change by aligning systems and activities to the vision, and put necessary training and resources behind the desired changes.
6. Generate short-term wins by using the energy from small successes to build enthusiasm and energy for taking on the tougher challenges.
7. Consolidate gains and produce more change; take on the institutional barriers with more intensity and resolve.
8. Anchor new approaches by building a culture of evaluation and continuous improvement and by creating an environment that supports both individual and organizational learning.⁷

⁶Even though there was some acknowledgment that effective models to be considered existed in other countries, some had questions about what happens to personal choice and control if the government has a greater role in what is now primarily an employer-based system.

⁷Kotter, John. *Leading Change*. Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard Business Press, 1996.

Following the presentation, participants were asked to list, from their own experiences, factors that contributed to successful, as well as unsuccessful, change efforts. Their responses fell into several themes, which are summarized in Table 1.

Successful Change Efforts	Unsuccessful Change Efforts
Use data to understand problems and needs as well as data to support the options or plans being implemented	A perception that the change was just one among many that received little or no follow-through, the “flavor of the month” syndrome
Change be communicated to all affected	Bad timing
The parties involved be honest with each other and be able to build trust	Failure to achieve input from those affected or with expertise to bear
Learn from past efforts and utilize feedback	Failure to achieve buy-in from those affected
The change being inclusive , eliciting involvement from those affected	Lack of flexibility
Having enough time for the process to work and stakeholders being patient	Poorly thought out
Being consistent with other goals	No or poor communication
Having a flexible implementation process	Fear-resistance not addressed
Incorporating follow-up plans	Insufficient will
Accomplished through a joint labor-management process	The resources needed to support change were not provided or sufficient

Table 1: Successful vs. Unsuccessful Change Efforts

As shown in the table, the list of factors contributing to unsuccessful change efforts was almost a negative mirror image of the successful change efforts. Through the discussion, participants saw that many of their experiences with change had common elements, which lent credibility to their own experiences, reflections, and observations.

Presentation: Work and Family Issues in Law Enforcement (Wednesday morning)

Peter Berg, associate professor in the School of Labor and Industrial Relations, shared some findings from a multiyear research project conducted with union and nonunion employers that included one police department from a major city. He reported that, in general, the employment experience for many people is changing through global competition, income insecurity, an aging population, and changing demands in the workplace. These changes create significant problems as people attempt to optimize the balance between their work and family lives. The problems are magnified by worries over health care, the demands on dual earner couples (which may be both an economic necessity as well as a personal choice), a high amount of time on the job put in by workers and families each year, and changes in job characteristics and demands that often increase work intensity. Moreover, advances in technology and the ease of workplace flexibility often blur the lines between work and home.

In the policing sector, many of these same influences are felt along with several others that include: staffing levels that may be inadequate; high use of overtime; the type of work performed which often is very stressful on the officer; limitations on recruitment practices that may keep women (and men) from returning to work following parental leave; and scheduling issues that may cause conflict and interfere with family needs.

Berg asked participants to identify work-life flexibility issues that they encounter or are aware of and to develop solutions. The groups identified many of the same issues mentioned in the presentation and offered various solutions. There was widespread agreement that for effective and enduring solutions it was critical for the union to play an active role in developing and implementing policies. Moreover, the entire group agreed that the goal of policies to reduce the stress between work and family should be “flexibility without favoritism.”

Skill-Building Session #2: Interest-Based Approach to Problem Solving (Wednesday evening)

In this session, Julie Brockman and Donna Winthrop, faculty members of the School of Labor and Industrial Relations, introduced the concept of interest-based approaches to problem solving. An interest-based approach is a structured process that begins with questions to identify and understand the problem. It then focuses on what each party needs (their interests) from a solution, generates options through a nonevaluative brainstorming process, then evaluates the options against key stakeholder needs (interests), and crafts a solution from those options that best addresses these needs. Brockman and Winthrop described how the interest-based approach can be applied to workplace problems, planning, grievance handling, and last but not least, collective bargaining. They also pointed out how the interest-based problem-solving (IBPS) approach is similar to other problem-solving models that participants might be familiar with, such as SARA (Scanning, Assessment, Response, and Assessment), but also uniquely different in the emphasis it places on identifying key stakeholders and what they need from a solution in order to be satisfied with the outcome. In addition, they showed how the IBPS approach differs from traditional bargaining or problem solving. Traditionally, positions are identified and defended, with the parties trying to find a middle ground which often results in a solution that doesn't address anyone's needs.

Believing that the best way to learn the interest-based approach was to apply it, Brockman and Winthrop broke the group of participants into three smaller union-management groups. Then, along with Michael Polzin, they facilitated a practice application of the interest-based problem-solving approach on an issue that they assigned to the groups. In the case, the groups were asked to identify the problem and then work through the IBPS model.

The groups were given about 45 minutes to work through the model and were not necessarily expected to come to a solution in that time. The main objective was that the groups get an idea for what it was like working through the model and for the facilitators to have an opportunity to provide additional comments about applying the model at appropriate times during the exercise. A key point facilitators wanted to emphasize was that being able to succinctly state the problem in a way that all agree and understand can take a significant amount of time. Also, participants were encouraged not to confuse interests with options.⁸ Participants were reminded that especially in the law enforcement world, people were often expected to be able to quickly size up a situation and come up with a solution, so following a structured process that required them to defer making a decision about an option might seem awkward and even unnecessary. However, they were also reminded that the IBPS approach is not intended to work in all situations, but is most useful when an issue is complex or emotionally charged and/or a decision requires a high degree of acceptance and a strong willingness to carry it out by those affected.

Presentation: Recruitment, Staffing, and Retention Strategies (Thursday morning)

For the fourth issue-based session, Mark Roehling, associate professor in the School of Labor and Industrial Relations, provided information and insights on the recruitment and retention process and applied it to law enforcement organizations. He began by describing recruitment as a set of activities used to obtain a reasonably qualified pool of applicants. He said that an organization's goal should be to have a number of reasonably qualified applicants to choose from when a vacancy occurs, which makes it clear that generating numbers of applicants is not sufficient. He went on to outline the three primary ways of attaining success in attracting applicants:

1. Change attributes of the job and/or organization that impact job choice, such as pay, benefits, scheduling flexibility, education requirements, and working conditions.
2. Change the targeted applicant pool, such as changing minimum qualifications required, increasing focus on lateral (experienced) transfers, and increasing the number of sources and/or geographic scope of targeted applicants.
3. Become more efficient and effective at executing recruitment activities.

He went on to state that one of the most underutilized, and more effective, recruiting sources is direct referral. The cost is relatively low, and applicants from this source tend to be more qualified and have lower turnover rates. Roehling offered the following selected "best practice" recruiting suggestions that can help in being more effective and efficient:

- » Make applicants feel valued.
- » Minimize "time-to-hire" and avoid unexplained delays at all costs.
- » Recruiters should display warmth, friendliness, and be informative.
- » Make any web sites user friendly.
- » Quality of recruiting materials is more important than specific designs and formats.

⁸Interests are what each stakeholder needs from a solution in order to be satisfied with the outcome.

- » Unless turnover is not a concern, adopt a realistic—but not too realistic early on—job preview.
- » Offer signing or referral bonuses or other appropriate cash incentives.
- » Assess and do not assume the effectiveness of your recruiting efforts.
- » Allow flexibility in applications and completing testing.

Roehling also discussed retention management which is an ongoing difficulty for many departments. He listed some of the primary causes of voluntary turnover as low job satisfaction, personal or nonjob reasons, and the availability of alternative job opportunities that are perceived to be better opportunities. Low job satisfaction might have a number of causes including: the job itself, workload, lack of training and advancement opportunities, lack of respect, compensation and benefits, ability to balance work and nonwork life, lack of job security, and perception of one's performance as being inadequate. He encouraged participants to understand the nature and causes of turnover in their departments by collecting data from human resource tracking systems, employee surveys and focus groups, performance review sessions, exit interviews, and post exit interviews. He closed by providing participants with links to several web-based tools they might use to enhance their recruitment efforts.

Participants had a number of questions about improving recruitment practices and developing effective retention strategies. Participants understood that how a department addresses work-family issues could have a significant effect on recruitment and retention. One provocative question that emerged from the discussion asked why it was that law enforcement agencies did not strive to be included in the “best places to work” listing in their respective communities. No one present could provide a salient answer, though several acknowledged that the idea of striving to be known as one of the best places to work in the community had much merit.

Skill-Building Session #3: Applying Joint Strategies and Initiatives (Thursday evening)

The third skill-building session of the symposium built on the two previous sessions. In this session, Michael Polzin, associate professor in the School of Labor and Industrial Relations and the director of Police Union-Management Programs, made a brief presentation in support of the value of using a structured process when trying to work effectively in a joint union-management initiative. He introduced another tool that is often used to help groups prioritize and create an agenda for change—the force field analysis. He then divided the group (with both union and management members) and gave them the task of using a force field analysis to identify the forces that help and those that hinder their department's recruiting and retention efforts. Once groups had identified these helping and hindering forces, they were instructed to choose one that they thought was most significant. Next, they were asked to practice, on their own, applying an interest-based problem-solving process to remove that barrier.

It is sometimes difficult for groups to adjust to taking time to use a structured process for problem solving and planning, especially those that work in a fast-paced, quick decision-making environment. However, because the groups had practiced using the IBPS method under the guidance of a facilitator the day before, many found that it was not awkward to follow a structured process. In addition, when first learning to use an IBPS method, many find it somewhat difficult to keep interests and options separate. However, most of these groups succeeded at this task and in the process came up with good ideas about addressing some of the barriers to developing and conducting an effective recruitment and retention strategy.

In the debrief of the exercise, several participants indicated that they found the IBPS method to be potentially very useful, especially in situations in which there were likely to be significant tensions around the issue. Others remarked that the method did not make much sense to them after practicing in the facilitated groups the day before, but that by applying the IBPS method a second time, and facilitating the process themselves, their understanding and learning increased quite a bit.

Skill-Building Session #4: Joint Initiatives in a Changing Environment (Friday morning)

This final session was designed to provide an opportunity for participants to practice working one more time in a union-management context. They were given the following assignment.

Your group needs to make a concise presentation to a national policing conference about the issue you have chosen (health care, work-life balance, or recruiting the police workforce of the future). Please meet as a group and plan your presentation. Your talk should look at the topic from a joint labor-management point of view and should answer the following questions for your audience:

- » Why is this an important topic for policing organizations today?
- » Why should this topic be taken on from a joint labor-management point of view?
- » What is the value-added of adopting such an approach?
- » What strategies do you believe hold promise in addressing this issue?
- » What is the path forward on this issue that you would advise policing organizations to take?

Participants formed themselves into groups based on the topic they wished to work on. All groups had both union and management members. When the time allotted for the group work had expired, each group presented their responses and their process to the larger group.

In the debrief following the presentations, many participants commented that the additional practice in applying a joint labor-management process to a simulated case was of great value, as it helped to solidify many of the concepts they learned in the skill-building sessions. Several people commented on the value that an interest-based process can bring to union-management conversations. Others expressed that they saw great value in applying a joint labor-management approach to some of the critical issues facing their departments, because they believed that the perspective of both union and management were key to finding appropriate and effective solutions.

Reflections and Observations on the Symposium

Participant evaluations of the symposium were very positive, with most ranging from “very good” to “excellent” (see Table 2). Many participants reported that they enjoyed participating in the sessions with their own union or management counterparts. Others stated that their overall experience would have been better if their counterparts had attended with them. Participants said that they learned a great deal from the content sessions as well as the skill-building sessions. They described the most effective sessions as those where they had an opportunity to practice applying the skills they were learning. Several participants cited that everything they had been learning really came together in the final session, where they developed presentations using a joint labor-management approach.

Participants enjoyed both the structure of the symposium as well as the process. They appreciated the opportunity to interact with peers, and they learned a lot from the small group discussions and exercises. Participants enjoyed being able to ask questions at virtually any point during the presentations and they came to appreciate the power, utility, and value of using a joint union-management approach. Even participants that had unsuccessfully tried to use an interest-based approach to bargaining in their home departments saw the value that it can add to tasks within their respective organizations. Overall, there was a common acknowledgment that a joint labor-management approach can add considerable value to discussions, planning, and problem-solving sessions that are part of daily operations in law enforcement agencies. It was agreed that by applying specific tools, such as interest-based approaches to problem solving, there is a much greater chance for success. This was in marked contrast to the first attempt, described in the beginning of this report, of bringing police union and management leaders together to implement community policing.

Category	Number of Respondents	% of Total
Excellent (5)	14	44%
Very Good (4)	15	47%
Good (3)	3	9%
Fair (2)	0	0%
Poor (1)	0	0%
Total # of Evaluations	32	78%
Total Number of Participants	41	100%

Table 2: Breakdown of Participant Evaluations

Summary

The National Joint Police Union-Management Executive Symposium, held at Michigan State University, brought together union and management leaders from various law enforcement agencies. By working together, they were able to address critical issues that they faced. While there were many presentations and discussions that took place, there were also many opportunities for the participants to practice and build skills they had learned. During the week, there were nine total sessions. The first session was a Challenge Census session that provided an opportunity to explore problems facing the policing sector. There were also four issue-based sessions which elaborated on challenges and introduced new ways of dealing with them. The final four skill-building sessions provided participants an opportunity to apply the tools they were taught.

As a result of the symposium, participants discovered that a joint approach to problem solving and planning, in particular, is more enduring than a more traditional adversarial approach. Moreover, participants were able to see that the success that comes from using a joint process is often magnified by increased trust between union and management and by an increased confidence in their ability to achieve successful outcomes.

Symposium organizers and sponsors plan to build on the success of this program by conducting other joint union-management forums and by assisting individual departments and unions in their efforts to engage in joint union-management initiatives.

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From October 27-31, 2008, the 1st National Joint Police Union-Management Executive Symposium was held at Michigan State University. The symposium was sponsored by the School of Labor and Industrial Relations and the School of Criminal Justice from Michigan State University, and by the U.S. Department of Justice Office of Community Oriented Policing Services. The symposium brought together union and management leaders from law enforcement agencies across the United States along with representatives from Canada, Australia, and Turkey. The program included several issue-based content sessions as well as several skill-building sessions that helped participants to frame and understand the implications of key issues that affect both union and management. For these issues to be addressed most effectively, it is vital that both union representatives and management tackle them together. This report summarizes the presentations and discussions that took place during the symposium in order to provide police union and management leaders insights to help them work more effectively together.



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