

Constitutional Policing: Organizational Values

Voiceover

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

Nazmia Comrie

00:08

Hello and welcome. My name is Nazmia Comrie and on behalf of the COPS Office, I'd like to introduce you to Deputy Chief Mike Bray of the Sacramento Police Department. Deputy Chief Mike Bray is here today to discuss Constitutional policing. Deputy Chief Bray, the mission statement and organizational values of the Sacramento Police Department are very community focused. How has your department created trust and collaboration between community residents and police officers?

Deputy Chief Mike Bray

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I think by focusing on a couple of things, one being transparency and two being trust. We've taken advantage of social media by broadcasting our information, our goings on of the police department, and we've done it wholeheartedly. We push out tons and tons of information to let the community, let our city, know what we're doing. We push out not only crime information but the things that we do wrong and admitting fault and letting people know that sometimes we do stumble, but we're very forthcoming with information. And we also take advantage of good things that our officers, our employees, do for the community and constantly letting the community know that we're not just out to arrest and incarcerate. We're trying to get away from that model. So we're pushing out information constantly. We have thousands—over 20,000—Twitter followers, which is a pretty good size for an agency of less than 700 police officers. So we have a solid following with Twitter. We have about 20,000 Facebook followers and we've taken advantage of LinkedIn, Pinterest, Instagram, just about everything, to get information out and be as transparent as possible. And not only on social media but also when we have crimes or incidents going on in the city, we get out in front of the camera on a personal level. I get information out quickly. People aren't sitting around wondering what happened and begging us for information and asking questions. So we try to take an offensive approach, getting out and letting people know information that is going on quickly, and so I think that's important. We've also connected with our neighborhoods in a dramatic fashion the last year and a half. With the economic downturn in California, we were forced to lay off a lot of officers, a lot of employees. Part of that was our connection with our neighborhood watch. We had folks that run those and that, unfortunately, was a program that was cut. Last year we reconnected in trying to build back our neighborhood watch again to reach out to the community and let them know what we were doing. We connected with nextdoor.com which is quickly hooking up with lots of departments across the country. When we started last summer, we had 1200 existing nextdoor.com users in our city. We did a massive push throughout the entire city and now we have over 23,000 households that are connected to nextdoor.com and that represents almost 90

percent of the neighborhoods within our city. So again, it's pushing out information, connecting with neighborhoods on a personal level and on a social media level and that's been very helpful for us.

We've also established what we call our cops and clergy program to get to the trust part of the question. And that is reaching out to all the faith-based leaders, or as many faith based leaders as we can in our city, and trying to establish trust because unfortunately law enforcement, especially in communities of color, has been distrusted for decades. And so we recognize that and we're trying to build that up. And this was done a couple of years ago, and we're continuing to push the program, and it's been very successful. We've connected with over 25 faith-based leaders within our city that all lead churches in communities of color. And again being very transparent, this is who we are, this is what we do, and this is why we do the things that we do and explaining our process to these pastors and these church leaders. We also bring them into our organization, and they come out, and faith-based leaders ride with our officers every other Friday night and they go out and they knock on doors and talk to people. And it represents a united front as to who we are, what we do, and the fact that we are connecting with communities of color through the faith-based leaders, who are generally recognized as trusted figures in their community. And so it's been extremely helpful for us.

We've also established—or, we developed—a cops and clergy academy. And so we did a 10-week program to bring in more faith-based leaders. And so we had 35 pastors complete our 10-week program, and they loved it. Again, they asked a lot of hard questions and we provided a lot of answers. But again, it opened eyes and opened the doors for both sides. So it's been very helpful for them to see what we do and for us to connect with the community and helping connect. So it's been very beneficial for us and it's also going to, we hope, lead to down the path for recruitment and being a recruitment tool they can connect with their community to, again, explain what we do and why we do it and the fact that police officers and law enforcement in general are not bad. We're not here to just to arrest and incarcerate people.

Comrie

04:54

Thank you. In what ways do reinforce your officer training and education to be reflective of the values of the community you serve?

Bray

05:02

If I can back up to the first question. Sorry. I have one last thing.

Comrie

05:04

Oh yes. Sorry.

Bray

05:05

We've also established we're going to a geographic policing model. And historically, we have rotated officers or allowed officers to sign up annually to the areas that they work. So they can pick the part of town, the shift, the days off based on seniority, and it's been done for decades that they would rotate. So what we have done is established a geographic policing model to put officers, sergeants, and lieutenants in specific geographic areas for two years now. And the whole concept is to push down the decision making to the supervisor/middle management level and allow officers to connect and have a deeper connection with their community for a two year period of time. And the idea is that they will connect with the business community, the schools, neighborhood watch, youth groups, things of this nature; to, again, form stronger connections. Again, the geographic policing model.

Comrie

05:57

In what ways do you reinforce your officer training and education to be reflective of the values of the community you serve?

Bray

6:02

Our formalized training starts in our academy. With the economic downturn we lost a lot of officers. So now, we're in a big hiring mode, so a good portion of our department is new and young. So they're coming through our academy and we start our cultural diversity training, our cultural sensitivity training, in our academy. We also do what's called a cultural immersion project which we copied from—I believe it was Austin, Texas—and we've been doing it five or six years now. We get a group of academy students. All of our academy recruits are divided up into groups, and they are tasked with going out in the community and finding diverse groups within the community, spending the day interviewing folks, exchanging ideas, learning about their culture, their faith, their culture, things that are important to them, and then coming back and doing projects and reporting back to our academy class. It's been very successful in helping our folks gain a deeper understanding of our community.

We also do cultural sensitivity and diversity training every couple years with our patrol staff. While we do it now, we could always do better. We could always get more training, more exposure to different cultures within our city. We've also established our core principles and our core values we hold important, and that's professionalism and partnerships and prevention and intervention. And we've woven these principles into our academy training, our field training, our employee evaluations, and holding folks accountable and taking ownership of the protection of their communities that they're assigned to. Again, we're trying to move away from the arrest and incarcerate model over to valuing the importance of an absence of crime. And so we're not looking for statistics on citations and things like an arrest. We're looking for people who make meaningful connections in the community and providing prevention/intervention strategies. And we value and evaluate those things.

Comrie

07:54

Great. What role does tolerance for different people, culture, or viewpoint play in Constitutional policing?

Bray

08:01

It's huge. We need to value everybody in our community. We need to understand who they are, where they're coming from, what challenges that they face, and explain to them the way the Constitution is drafted and how we operate, how it's the formation and the bedrock of what we do as police officers and make sure that they understand and take the time to establish some lines of communication and explain to people what we're doing and why we're doing it and not just go for the parole-probation-take people to jail model. Again, getting away from that, and taking the time to let people know we need to follow the law to enforce the law.

Comrie

08:41

Finally, in the wake of Ferguson, Missouri, how is policing being redefined?

Bray

08:46

As tragic as that incident is, there's going to be a lot of good coming out of it. It's highlighting some critical areas within law enforcement across the nation that are areas that we can do better. First and foremost, diversifying our organizations. It highlighted that fact that—the incident in Ferguson illuminated the fact that most law enforcement agencies are not reflective of their community percentage wise. We don't have enough African-American employees and officers, or Asians, or Hispanics. And we need to do a better job of diversifying our organizations and recruiting people to mirror the communities that we serve, and that will go a long way of establishing trust. So I know most all agencies have made a concerted effort for decades to try and diversify. But we need to do better. We need to be more creative and to reach these qualified candidates and bring them into our organizations, and I think that will help establish some trust. It will help further trust within our communities.

I think it also highlighted how transparent organizations are. And I touched on this earlier that it's critical that we be transparent—we get out information as quickly as possible because the longer we sit on details of incidents, especially high profile incidents, it creates significant mistrust within our communities, and we need to get information out—good, bad, or indifferent, it needs to be out, and we need to let people know what we did, why we did it, and without jeopardizing the investigation, we need to get out the facts as quickly as we can to let people know what we're doing. Ferguson also highlighted the issues that they had with dealing with large groups of people, mass arrests, civil disobedience. And so I think there's going to be a re-examining of strategies and tactics and equipment and how we deal with groups of people who are committed to civil disobedience and demonstrating and the fact that we need to allow people to be able to express their first amendment rights and freedom of

speech and we need to be able to allow them to do that but still maintain order and civility within the communities that we police.

Comrie

10:48

Thank you for your time and expertise today.

Voiceover: *The Beat Exit*

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The Beat was brought to you by the United States Department of Justice, COPS Office. The COPS Office helps to keep our nation's communities safe by giving grants to law enforcement agencies, developing community policing publications, developing partnerships, and solving problems.

Voiceover: Disclaimer

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