

The BJA Executive Session on

Police Leadership

2013

The BJA Executive Session on Police Leadership is a multi-year endeavor started in 2010 with the goal of developing innovative thinking that would help create police leaders uniquely qualified to meet the challenges of a changing public safety landscape.

In support of an integrated approach to creating safe and viable communities across America, the project directors recruited 20+ principals from a range of disciplines. The principals, in turn, led national field teams of practitioners focused on the work of policing and the organization of the future.

To gain new insights on leadership, the *BJA Executive Session on Police Leadership* engaged police chiefs in documenting their own paths and invited leaders to participate in various audio and video forums to tell their stories and discuss the future of policing and police leadership.

Please visit our website, <http://bjaleader.org>, to learn more about this project and to access a broad array of interactive, multimedia resources.

The principals are supported in their work by a team that includes project co-directors Darrel W. Stephens and Bill Geller, project strategist Nancy McKeon, and BJA Senior Policy Advisor Steve Edwards.

Creating Leaders for the Future: II. Shaping a New Environment - The Learner's Marketplace

by

Nancy McKeon, Ph.D.
and Ellen Scrivner, Ph.D., ABPP

In our preceding paper, "I. Re-Thinking Leadership Development", we took the position up front that the organization of the future cannot be driven by leadership development models of the past. The public service environment is evolving toward a business model of partnership or co-production.¹ Policing should join this evolution to shore up its own relevancy to the creation of viable communities in the 21st century. This vision of partnership extends beyond shared event management, for example, to a new business model of co-owned community goals and work processes that cross municipal departments and reach all the way into community organizations of all kinds.

We recognize that this ambitious public service vision cannot be carried out by police alone. It requires the engagement and direction of mayors, city managers, and

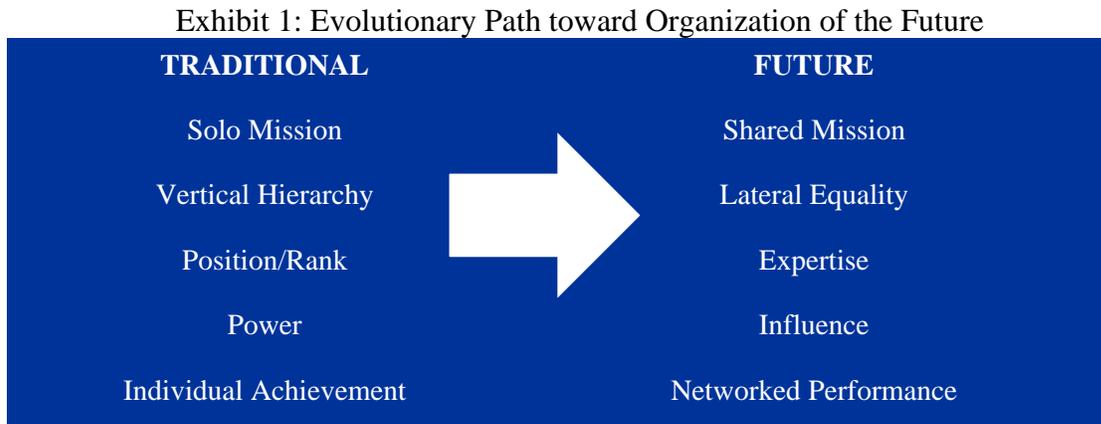
other municipal leaders. The principals of the BJA Executive Session on Police Leadership believe that policing is well positioned to help influence and even lead such an evolution. In recent years, policing has tested some internal consolidation and undertaken many efforts at partnership with other organization and with the communities they serve. Police leaders have learned what does and doesn't work, and the profession has begun to develop some of the skills and behaviors required in the new delivery model.²

Our focus here is on the evolution in policing that we believe must continue and that can both make policing more effective and efficient and position it to be a model and leader of a larger evolution. As we will discuss, it is helpful to think of policing as moving from a past rooted in a command and control (closed) system toward a more open system. Creating a leadership development model for such a systemic transformation requires much more than incremental change in training curricula or new experiential learning programs. We believe it requires comprehensive, "big picture" re-thinking of both the way leaders actually develop and the learning environment we provide. We've chosen the Learner's Marketplace as our frame of reference for that new big picture.

Specifically, "Shaping a New Environment: The Learner's Marketplace" describes a new mindset and developmental environment—its rationale, design, and applications. An interactive graphic accompanies the paper.

The Learner's Marketplace—The Rationale

The key to understanding the need for a new approach to leadership development lies in recognizing the difference between a "closed" and an "open" system or business model. What does that really mean? And why does it require new leadership practices? Exhibit 1 captures five major paths on the evolution from a "closed" system to an "open" system.



It is almost impossible to think about such an evolution and not conclude that the leadership model will have to change in the organization of the future. Exhibit 1 captures five separate paths that together go from mission to metrics. There are certainly other paths that may come to mind as you read this. This evolution has sweeping potential.

Why will the leadership model have to change? The traditional organization of Exhibit 1 is a command and control system with vertical hierarchy as its "backbone." Within this

vertical system, people are recruited, trained, deployed, evaluated, and rewarded along one central (backbone) path by people who have gone before them on the same path. Variations do not stray far from the central path. Furthermore, the closed nature of the system is reinforced by the fact that policing historically has little mobility across jurisdictions and the country. Officers joined and lived out their careers in one department. As the organization of the future evolves, this vertical system will start to coexist with a new horizontal system. In the evolution from closed to open, the protective, well-defined boundaries of the (highly successful) silo will become permeable and potentially fall away. As that happens, leadership modes of authority, decision making, and talent management, among others, will be redefined.

This more open system or business mode will play out on three levels:

- **The individual police officer.** In the public service model, officers will work laterally with other departments of their municipality and their community—not as special assignments but as a regular part of their job. They will need to develop skills like collaboration, strategy, setting goals, and problem solving earlier in their careers. They will also need to understand the workings of municipalities and how policing fits into the mosaic of public service. A new development model should include ways to prepare officers—from the beginning of their careers—for accelerated, deeper participation and responsibility.
- **The police department.** In a more open system of accelerated participation and responsibility, the issue of learning takes on a new meaning. Parallel organizations—talent-based groups that exist outside vertical hierarchy—are one internal learning methodology that can give officers at all levels experience with collaboration, strategy, goal setting, and problem solving. Peer learning becomes a necessity and mentoring extends beyond the police department. Talent management becomes a matter of recognizing skills and aptitudes outside and beyond rank. Finally, the need to define and embrace a new learning dynamic will be critical to creating leaders for the organization of the future.
- **The police leader.** Leadership at the top will change in two directions: horizontally and vertically. “Horizontally,” the leader will now collaborate with peers across the municipality—again, not just in a project or event format but as a central part of the job. In fact, department heads across the municipality will have the same goals. Leaders should be the first learners of the lateral municipal business model. Today’s chiefs tell us that navigating political realities will be critical for future chiefs. Leaders will have to develop working (not just social or ceremonial) networks and make smart alliances for their departments. Leaders will have to learn to operate with influence more than with authority of position. “Vertically,” they will need to build a new dynamic and—most important—adopt and demonstrate a new mindset about the mission of policing in today’s America and the operational balance between the more-closed vertical system and the emerging more-open horizontal system. Leaders are typically direct and help others to change; here they will have to change themselves, beginning with mindset.

This evolution is historic and will require leaders with a passion to make it happen. Not only will it require new learning, it will also require some “unlearning.” The Learner's Marketplace is a framework for helping with that evolution.

The Learner's Marketplace: 21st Century Design Components

The Learner's Marketplace is an overlay on the organization of the future. Its primary goal, therefore, is to capture and frame the dynamics required to grow and support the leaders we need for the future. In our preceding paper—“I. Re-thinking the Way We Develop Leaders”—we outline significant changes in the world of policing and learning. We build on and add to those variables in the marketplace design principles:

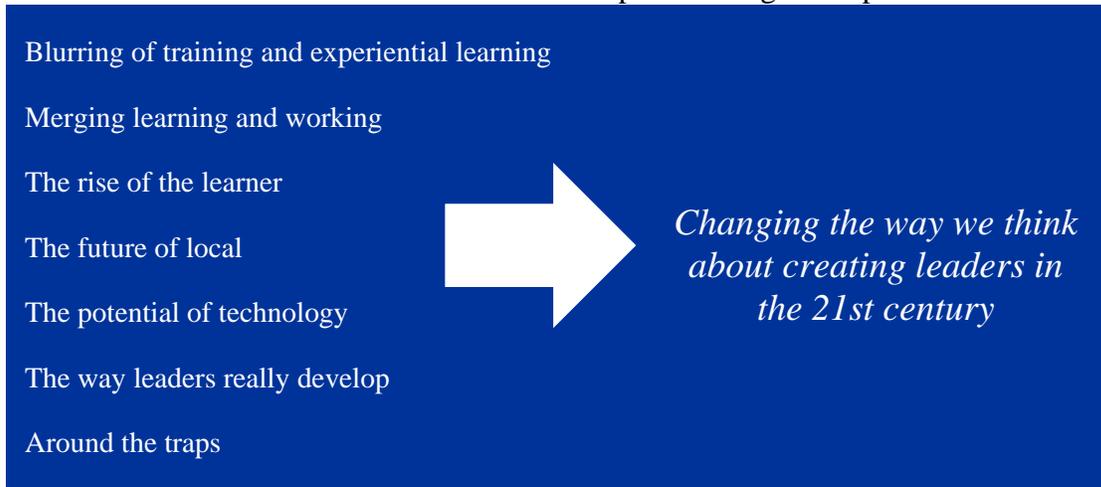
- **The blurring of training and experiential learning.** In the Learner's Marketplace, we use “experience” to denote all learning, not just a type of event or venue. For years now, curriculum designers have made efforts to bring real time into the classroom through hands-on problem solving, table-top exercises, and work on real projects from home organizations. We have developed hybrid models blending the classroom with time back in the field. Likewise, some experiential programs have adopted classroom-type components. Learning venues have changed with virtual classrooms, and experiential learning has expanded to include time spent not only in like organizations but also in other professions than one's own.
- **Merging learning and working.** Traditionally, across all professions, one usually stepped away from working to go to training. Whether learning from the training was ever applied back in the workplace was at best left to chance, at worst ignored or even discouraged by supervisors (new learning can be disruptive). There are efforts today in business and professional schools to link the workplace and training more closely. On-the-job training (OJT) was largely used in manufacturing but was an attempt, along with just-in-time (JIT) training, to bring learning closer to the workplace and instant application. From the other end, after-action debriefings are also efforts to place learning close to the workplace. Elements of the longstanding teaching hospital model (where working and training are the same thing) are being tested as possible models for policing. As with classroom training and experiential learning, the boundaries between training and working are becoming more permeable.
- **The rise of the learner.** With advances in neuroscience, we are able to understand better how individuals interact with their environment. Driven by pedagogy, cost, generational changes, and technology, education is changing from a push model to a pull model, from one model of traditional institution-led education to a consumer-focused menu of choices. In The Learner's Marketplace, we translate this rise of consumer learner as a responsibility of the individual to interact alertly with all experience. We need to give individuals the tools to do so.
- **The future of local.** In the organization of the future, the borders of policing will come down in some ways and the work of policing will be done across municipal departments and out into the community. That suggests that a new approach to

training should cross disciplines for individuals and groups who will work together (cross boundaries, horizontally) in the co-production of safe and viable communities. Local (cross-boundary) learning/training is a new strategy in the Learner's Marketplace.

- **The potential of technology.** Sourcing and mass learning are continuing to be explored for creativity, problem solving, and broad virtual classrooms. In the Learner's Marketplace, we use technology for those purposes (smaller scale) and for interpersonal uses like mentoring and follow up to remote training. While new technologies can help with access, timeliness, and venue, the real challenge will be to use each new technology to redefine the substance and learning experience as well. It is the difference between moving a lecture from a classroom to streaming video without rethinking what streaming video can change in the presentation, delivery, and interaction.
- **The way leaders really develop.** As part of the work of the BJA Executive Session on Police Leadership, we “poked and prodded” experienced police chiefs to find out how they think they developed as leaders. Often the most formative experiences are opportunistic or even accidental. They also report the high value of non-policing experience. Finally, the role of early leaders (e.g., a first sergeant, a field training officer) can play a major role in teaching what leading is all about. Aspiring leaders watch leaders. We factor all this into the marketplace.
- **Around the “Stars and Stripes.”** In our preceding paper—“Re-thinking the Way We Develop Leaders”—we include a tongue-in-cheek send up of the common practices that can undermine learning. They are all too familiar: people being rewarded by being sent to high-profile off sites or conferences, checklist or “ticket punched” training, copycat change, etc. In the Learner's Marketplace, we seek ways to work around those impediments, which breed a culture in which learning is not valued and, in fact, can be actively devalued with both formal and informal signals. The discouraging supervisors described above are just one example.

These seven design principles or components are internal and external variables that drive our Learner's Marketplace.

Exhibit 2: The Learner's Marketplace: Design Components



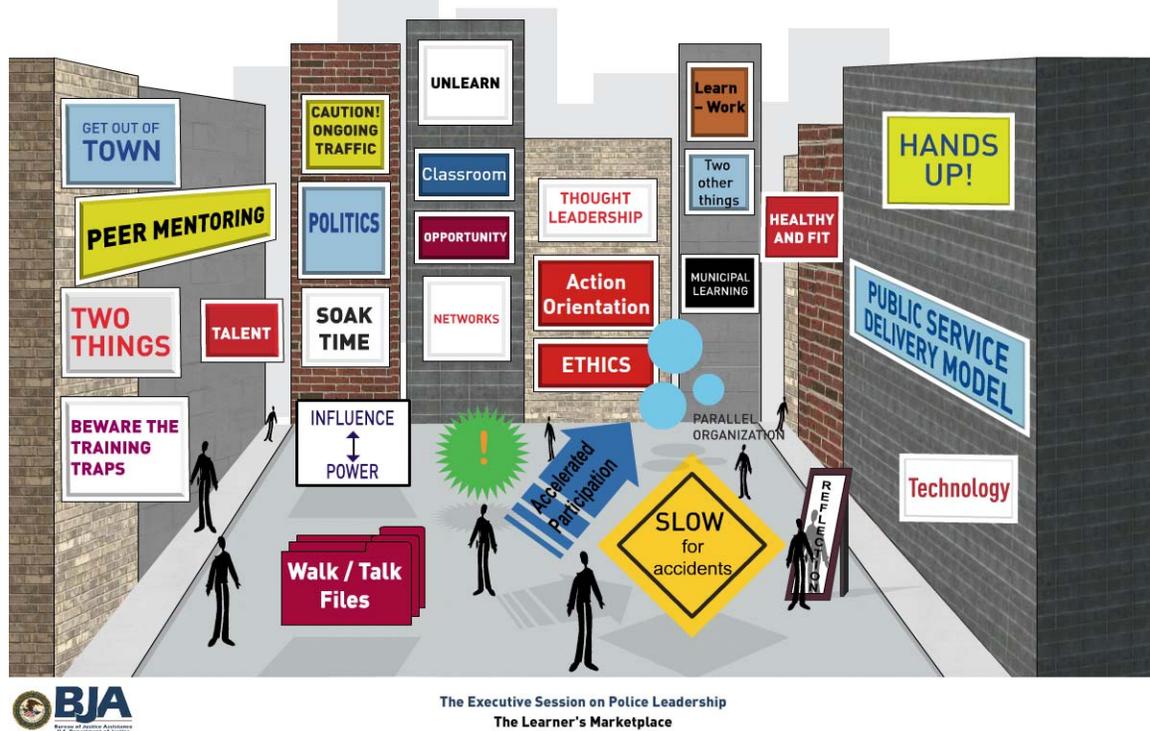
The Learner's Marketplace—Start Anywhere, Go Everywhere!

The world of public safety in the 21st century is evolving toward a broad-based municipal model focused on cities and their environs. To fit and help lead that evolution, policing itself must continue to evolve from a strict command and control (vertical) model to a more open, horizontal model.

Securing the police leadership we need for that future must begin with a new mindset about the challenge itself. We believe the central challenge going forward will not be to create new programs but rather to create a new local environment that leverages:

- The open landscape of 21st century learning with its explosion of methodologies, formats, and venues and the dramatic rise of the learner and the shift in trainer/learner dynamics.
- The non-programmatic, non-linear way leaders actually develop (as opposed to develop in theory). Our research with actual police leaders reveals that, looking back, leaders find that their paths were personal to them and shaping events were often opportunistic, even accidental.

Exhibit 3: The Learner's Marketplace Webpage

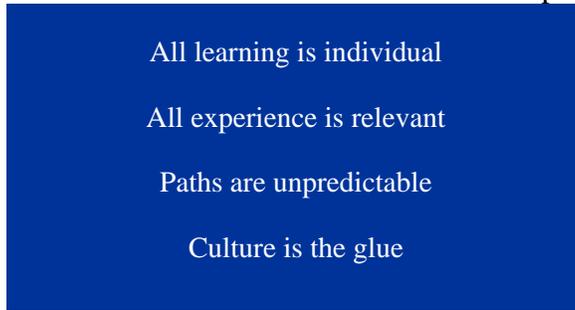


On the Learner's Marketplace webpage (see Exhibit 3), we represent this new environment with the image of an urban setting of random billboards competing for your attention. When visiting the website, you may start anywhere. Each billboard opens up to reveal its meaning and suggest new behaviors. You can (and should) go everywhere

A few points before you enter the website. The Learner's Marketplace is designed as an environment that allows leaders to emerge and thrive. It is not a developmental program. The difference has some significance. It underscores that in the 21st century learning and leading are changing in ways that go far beyond simply training, developing, or mentoring. Second, the concept of "creating leaders" recognizes that we (indeed the world) are moving beyond a vertical system of rank, title, testing, and promotion as ways to indicate progress toward leadership. In the new model, progress toward leaderly activities and responsibilities will be more creative and more self-created and less prescriptive.

This new world comes with new principles—the Four Rules in a No-Rules Marketplace (see Exhibit 4). They are the only rules in the Learner's Marketplace and are equal in importance and emphasis.

Exhibit 4. Four Rules in a No-Rules Marketplace



The four rules are as brief as mantras and easy to explain.

All learning is individual. Changes in learning methods, choices, and technologies have shifted power but also responsibility to the learner.

All experience is relevant. We know that leaders develop in many ways—formal and informal, planned and unplanned. Harnessing the potential of all experience is central to creating leaders for the future.

Paths are unpredictable. Each leader finds his or her own path and pace—with different milestones and unique markers. Superiors, peers, and mentors can help guide, interpret, and track that path.

Culture is the glue. In the more open organization of the future, it is the responsibility of the leaders from the top to the front lines to build and maintain an environment that promotes, connects, and values the learning of its participants.

The first rule—all learning is individual—seeks to capture an idea at the heart of the new approach to growing leaders. Learning depends on the interactive dynamic of the individual with his or her experience and environment. In part, that ability can be taught but it is also the “indefinable something” that sets strong leaders apart. We need to factor this into learning design. More important, we need to instill in the learner the sense of individual, active responsibility.

The second rule is about the relevance of all experience. We know that, looking back, leaders recount experiences that were opportunistic to the point of accidental, the exposure to the first sergeant they ever had, working outside policing, an informal conversation with a superior, etc., as among the most meaningful in setting them on a path or shaping them as they became leaders. As we think about growing leaders now, we need to attempt to harness the potential of all experiences.

The third rule—paths are unpredictable—flows right from the second. If all experiences have potential and the accidental can prove determinant, then paths are not predictable. One of the billboards in the Learner's Marketplace encourages the learner to “Pay Attention”—an important trait for today's learner.

The fourth rule is “Culture is the glue.” It is interesting to speculate, as we have with some of the chiefs we interviewed during our project, that when individuals are awarded their first top leadership job they already are the leaders they will become. While that may not be universally true, nevertheless we know that aspiring leaders watch the leaders ahead of them. It is incumbent upon current leaders to create the environment that will produce the leaders we need. That environment is cultural in that it embraces and gives access to everyone at all levels willing to participate.

The Learner's Marketplace is about creating an environment in which the leaders we need for the future can emerge and grow in many and diverse traditional and non-traditional ways. As such, we hope it provokes discussion, debate, and even a little disbelief but also delight and discovery. The graphic can be incorporated into presentations, leadership discussions, seminars, specialized training sessions, and mentoring programs.

One final note before you enter: The billboards themselves comprise activities, characteristics of learning and leading, and even a few tips. They are without order or hierarchy. Each is annotated with a roll of the mouse.

Welcome to the Learner's Marketplace. Visit often...

[Start Anywhere, Go Everywhere](#)

References

¹ Delivering Public Service in the Organization of the Future: A Model, Matt Bronson and Bob O'Neill, BJA Executive Session on Police Leadership, 2013.

² It might be worth remembering that the notion of police as a convener and collaborative partner is not new. Much of the community- and problem-oriented policing movements envisioned this role of the police. In some jurisdictions, community-oriented approaches to policing spread more broadly to community-oriented approaches to government within the community; whereas in other jurisdictions, the direction of influence was reversed.

The authors are Nancy I McKeon, Ph.D., project strategy consultant for the BJA Executive Session on Police Leadership, and Ellen Scrivner, Ph.D. ABPP, Executive Fellow at the Police Foundation, Washington, DC, a Subject Matter Expert on Police Reform.

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