

Building Your Blueprint to Success

Part 1: Learning to Asses Your Value

By Karin Montejo



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Women have been actively involved in law enforcement for the past 30 years. Although our sisters started their journey in the 1800's, women in policing have a relatively recent history. As a division chief for the largest police department in the southeastern United States, I have enjoyed a remarkable career in law enforcement. And it is the challenges, as well as the opportunities, that have prompted me to present these seminars to women who seek to follow a similar path.

Back in the 70's, people used to refuse to talk to me when I responded to a call because they wanted to talk to a "real" police officer. I remember being dispatched to a call four times until the complainant finally got it that he was going to have to talk to me or not make the report. Luckily, I had a supervisor who supported me and kept sending me back rather than reinforce the complainant's bias. Not to say that support was always there – my first sergeant used to tell me every day that I should quit and be a nurse or a teacher so that a man could support his family. The men on my squad tried to dissuade me from police work – one even going as far as trying to throw me into the pool on a call. Lucky for him he was able to brace himself against a pole, because I latched onto him and we were both headed into the water. I learned how to hold my ground, how to be a part of the team, but never one of the guys, and know when to draw the line. This insight did not come overnight, but over many years, and with the help of a multitude of men and women. And, today, it is my turn to pass on some of that wisdom and knowledge on to you.

Each of us is unique, and what I share with you will impact each reader differently. Every department has their own distinctive and idiosyncratic concerns. In fact, I just read an article on a small department hiring their first female police officer. For me, working in a department that employs about 23% of its sworn force with female officers, that is not a big deal. However, there are many departments who still do not have women in their entry level ranks, much less than in supervisory and command ranks. This is an on-going challenge, and one that many departments are recognizing as they work on recruiting and retaining women police officers. But there are areas that cross all sizes and types of organizations, and identifying and overcoming many of these challenges will enable you to not only succeed, but value what you have to offer your department.



Which brings me to another point – value – your value. What do you consider your value to your department? Have you ever thought of that? Probably not. So, if you don't think of your value, how do you expect your command staff to recognize it? We as women are notorious for diminishing our value; we are taught at an early age that it's not polite to brag – and so we don't. It is incumbent upon each and every one of us to market our value. How do you start? Right now, take a piece of paper and write down what you have done for your department. Not just your assignments, but what you have done in those assignments. If you're having trouble, it's because you didn't put the effort into recognizing what was entailed in accomplishing a certain goal. Recently, I was assisting a young woman with her preparation for an oral interview. She was concerned that although she had many of the requirements for the position, she had not been a supervisor and felt it was a major component that was lacking. However, what she didn't recognize was the fact that she handled supervisory issues on a daily basis and that she possessed the skills and abilities to be a supervisor; the only difference was that she was not currently in a supervisory position. Looking at it from a different point of view allowed her to see that she was in possession of the requisite skills and that she was certainly competent to interview and compete for the position. That's what I mean when I speak of value to your organization. Too often, when we are successful, we race along, basking in our success. We do not take the time to dissect how we succeeded. Failure is something we hate to experience, but it is one of the best educational tools for us. When we fail, we look to see what we did wrong, and try to come up with an alternative solution that will succeed. It is a growing process that allows us to achieve a positive outcome and learn from our mistakes.

We begin this journey with the basics that are essential for a solid foundation. As we progress, we incorporate additional pieces of information that will enable you to move forward with a leadership style that is specifically tailored for your needs and expectations. The first step is desire – you must want to move in a new direction. Where this journey takes you is up to you. As I said at the beginning of this article – success means different things to different people. What I expect from this and what you expect will never be identical. As you build a roadmap for your future, integrate those pieces that work for you. There is no blueprint for success – you must build your own. And having done that, you will be able to build your for aspiration and ambition – and see how far this journey takes you.



Looking for more?

The Women in Policing Seminars hosted by Karin Montejo feature interactive, student driven classes that prepare women in today's law enforcement field for the practical and often not so subtle aspects of assuming command. They are offered as one, two, or three day seminars and focus on critical skills necessary for women to bridge the gap from first line supervisors to command staff. Women's issues constitute a significant portion of the course, balanced with the practical aspects of defining leadership, learning to lead and improving leadership capacity.

At the completion of the courses, the students will be able to evaluate a variety of leadership styles and determine which techniques are most appropriate for them; they will recognize the gender-bender communications that interfere in understanding direction, resulting in failed outcomes, as well as the importance of balance in their work and personal life. Additional topics of instruction include issues of sexual harassment, recognizing and transforming negative views of police women, overcoming the challenges of the "brass ceiling", recognizing how the culture and climate of women in policing impacts the promotional process for female officers, identifying each student's leadership style, recognizing differences in communication skills; building a blueprint for their future, as well as time and stress management

These training seminars are readily adapted to suit your individual departmental requirements. For additional information on courses for your department, please contact Chief Karin Montejo directly at karin@montejoconsulting.com or (954) 465-6602. To learn more about the Women in Policing seminars, visit <http://www.montejoconsulting.com>

