Question 1: Is it true that community policing or problem-oriented policing must develop into a law enforcement organization’s philosophy of policing?

Answer 1:

For community policing or problem-oriented policing to be successful, it must be the philosophy of policing for a law enforcement organization. Otherwise, it may not succeed.

Top-level management, middle-level management, and first-level management must develop a full understanding of this organizational model which differs from traditional policing. Furthermore, management must fully support use of the model and recognize that it is not just a change in law enforcement operations but a change to a philosophy of community service and partnership with citizens.

Community policing or problem-oriented policing must then be fully supported by all the law enforcement organization's personnel—both sworn and nonsworn employees. An organizational philosophy of policing then develops that embraces police-community partnerships with an emphasis on crime prevention and problem solving.

Question 2: How is community policing or problem-oriented policing developed?

Answer 2:

Community policing or problem-oriented policing requires a complete operational and managerial assessment of the law enforcement agency with comprehensive thought given toward the future direction of the organization. This entails an examination of the organization’s vision, mission, and core values. This may require a revision or restatement of these values to fit future activities and services provided to the community.

Questions asked for this examination might include the following:

- Do the organization’s vision, mission, and core values statements truly conform to its daily operations?
- Does the organization have understandable meaning and belief for employees?
- Is the organization proactive enough or too reactive?
• Does the organization concentrate too much or too little on some policing operations?
• Is the organization strong or weak in police-community relations?
• Does the organization concentrate on solving crimes and apprehending criminals but place little emphasis on crime prevention and problem solving?
• What does the community think of the organization?

All employees should be included in answering such questions in the scope of a team effort. Elected officials and citizens should also be included to gain their input and direction.

After this has been completed, and if it has been determined that changes should be made to enhance police services, the policies, procedures, rules, regulations, position descriptions, in-service training, and education must be adjusted to match the organization's refocused vision, mission, and core values. The organizational infrastructure must functionally support the vision, mission, and core values if the organization is to be progressive. This requires a team effort that embraces all viewpoints.

With new or modified organizational directions come a reallocation of resources to adjust to the requirements of transitioning from traditional policing to community policing or problem-oriented policing. The focus should be placed on gaining assistance from the community and forming a partnership to address problems and concerns of the citizens. The following important areas should receive attention during the development process:

• Employee professional development and performance evaluation
• Special programs presently in operation and new programs sought
• Facility use
• Support services operation
• Mutual cooperation with governing officials, administration, and neighboring public safety and criminal justice agencies
• Budgeting in cooperation with governing officials in support of community policing or problem-oriented policing

Question 3: Has community policing or problem-oriented policing proved successful in all locations?
Answer 3:

The answer depends on the definition of the word successful. In the majority of instances, community policing and problem-oriented policing have recognizably proven to be successful when correctly developed and implemented. Both the law enforcement agencies and communities believe in it and have been pleased with the outcomes.

For community policing, various component programs have been judged successful; however, they have had little, if any, impact on actual crime. For example, studies conducted on additional foot patrols found that they did not reduce crime, but did improve community opinions on neighborhood safety. Neighborhood Watch studies also have indicated that these programs have little impact on crime. But in both instances, citizens felt more comfortable interacting with police in a partnership effort. It also seems that community organizing efforts work well in middle-class neighborhoods but less so in the poorest areas where residents are low-income minorities. Overall, researchers examined 6,100 cities in the United States over a 6-year period during President Bill Clinton's administration when the federal Office of Community Oriented Policing Services (COPS Office) provided significant funding for community policing hiring initiatives, and researchers concluded that the community policing strategy was extremely effective (Zhao & Thurman, 2001).

For problem-oriented policing, research evaluations have been more positive compared to evaluations regarding community policing. Law enforcement agencies have proven to be successful at analyzing problems in the community related to crime and crime prevention and have developed strategies to confront these problems. Law enforcement managers have empowered field officers to tackle a host of problems and concerns voiced by citizens, and officers have expressed sincere interest in partnering with citizens to solve problems. In a number of instances, they have developed innovative strategies for doing so.

Question 4: Have law enforcement officers readily embraced community policing and problem-oriented policing?

Answer 4:

The transition to community policing and problem-oriented policing was a battle for the hearts and minds of law enforcement officers because
traditional police organizational culture had stressed the importance of crime fighting (Lurigio & Skogan, 1994). Since the 1990s, both organizational models have been more readily accepted, especially with recruitment of new entry-level police officers as replacements for retiring officers.

Law enforcement managers have changed their policing philosophy as well. They have become more democratic and consultative in their management styles, creating organizational environments open to more participation, community involvement, and team effort within police departments. Law enforcement managers have become more diligent in initiating community partnerships and securing in-service training and education for officers focused on police-community relationships and problem-solving efforts.

Currently, the majority of law enforcement officers have accepted and supported the transition from traditional policing to community policing and problem-oriented policing. Incrementally, the organizational structures continue to change to accommodate the transition.

**Question 5:** How should the top-level manager (CEO) interact with elected officials who express concern about crime in their community?

**Answer 5:**

The top-level manager (CEO) of a law enforcement organization should pay serious attention to what his or her elected officials have to say regarding their concern about crime in the community. Elected officials are directly responsible to their constituents and lacking this sense of responsibility could prove detrimental to a positive relationship between the CEO and elected officials.

The CEO should ask elected officials to be candid and express their feelings. If the CEO does not have information on hand at the time when concerns are presented, the CEO should inform the elected official that he or she will conscientiously review what the official presented with staff and report back to the elected official in a timely manner.

After discussing this with his or her staff to gain information, thoughts, and suggestions for best addressing the expressed concerns, the CEO should report back to the elected officials with answers in a professional manner, being honest and forthright. Even if some concerns cannot be resolved, elected officials are often pleased that the CEO gave their concerns serious
Question 6: Is it important for a top-level, middle-level, or first-level law enforcement manager to take minor complaints seriously?

Answer 6:

Minor complaints from citizens or employees should be taken seriously at any level of law enforcement management. It is important to give any complaints from citizens prompt attention in order to foster positive police-community relations. It is equally important to give prompt attention to any complaints from the organization's employees, especially to avoid the filing of a formal grievance.

A law enforcement manager learns that addressing a minor complaint saves time and effort before it potentially escalates into a major concern for the complainant at a later time. A basic rule is never take a complaint lightly. Its investigation instills confidence in management's fairness and protects those accused of wrongdoing (Bennett & Hess, 2007).

Question 7: Have citizens come to prefer community policing and problem-oriented policing over traditional policing?

Answer 7:

The majority of citizens prefer community and problem-oriented policing over traditional policing. Community residents and businesses have become familiar with their police officers far more since law enforcement agencies have developed the philosophy that police-community partnerships are beneficial in addressing crime control and crime prevention.

Surveys have indicated that citizens favor these partnerships and realize that they share in the mission of combating crime in their communities. Law enforcement officers indicate that they feel more is being accomplished by working closely with citizen groups, and officers have expressed more job satisfaction.

As a result of successful community policing and problem-oriented policing initiatives, police officers are viewed more favorably in the majority of communities throughout the nation. Furthermore, many law enforcement officers have a more positive view of their citizens since they have come to
interact with them more closely. Foot patrol, bicycle patrol, and designated beat patrol have resulted in more favorable comments about law enforcement officers.

**Question 8:** What is zero-tolerance policing?

**Answer 8:**

Some law enforcement agencies have adopted zero-tolerance policing, which differs from community policing and problem-oriented policing in that it is primarily focused on the appearance of crime, minor criminal offenses, and disorder. This organizational model targets crime itself rather than focusing on crime prevention. This models also assumes that communities in greatest need of police are also the least likely to have the coherent social structures in place by which both community policing and problem-oriented policing organizational models work best.

Zero-tolerance policing often operates in those communities unable to provide support for strategies targeting crime control; therefore, the police must directly assume this responsibility. This differs from the thought that the community itself can serve as the primary agent of crime control, as is consistent with the thoughts regarding community policing and problem-oriented policing. Zero-tolerance policing does not attempt to identify or thoroughly analyze the cause of problems. Rather, this organizational model—characterized by a focus on place-specific interventions and essentially a back-to-the-basics strategy—targets specific types of minor crimes and disorder such as the following (Green, 2000):

- Prostitution
- Loitering
- Urinating in public
- Aggressive panhandling
- Farebeating
- Graffiti

Zero-tolerance policing is best known for its successful implementation in New York City in the 1990s, initiated by Police Commissioner William Bratton and Mayor Rudolph Giuliani. Although adopted by some other major cities, critics have argued that this organizational model encourages law enforcement officers to be overly aggressive. When put into practice, citizens have complained of police harassment; therefore, a majority of major cities
and smaller jurisdictions prefer the practice of community policing or problem-oriented policing.

**Question 9:** Do law enforcement managers feel comfortable with the organizational models of community policing and problem-oriented policing?

**Answer 9:**

The majority of law enforcement managers in police departments that transitioned from traditional policing to community policing or problem-oriented policing do express satisfaction with the change. They have indicated that police-community relations have improved, and elected officials have consequently been more supportive of policing operations.

There has been reluctance to change the organizational structure to accommodate the transition, but this has diminished in recent years, and law enforcement managers now feel more comfortable with the change because most communities prefer it. Managers still adhere to a quasi-military organizational structure, having a number of established written policies, procedures, rules, and regulations with closely monitored supervision. In addition, they have empowered field officers to employ innovative and creative approaches to crime prevention efforts and addressing citizen concerns.

Regardless, some police agencies continue to function primarily in the traditional policing mode, yet managers have added some community policing and problem-orienting policing concepts. For example, they have established foot patrol and bicycle patrol—even mounted horse patrol, inline skate patrol, and SUV patrol—and they have permanently assigned beats for patrol officers to increase police visibility.

**Question 10:** How is it best for law enforcement managers to handle conflicts with the public?

**Answer 10:**

Some conflicts with the public are inevitable, but beginning at the entry-level of law enforcement, new officers are promptly exposed to handling conflicts routinely as a significant part of their patrol duties. By the time these officers are promoted to a management position, they are certainly experienced with
conflict resolution.

The best manner in which a law enforcement manager should address conflicts with the public is to first ensure that he or she fully understands the cause of the conflict and to conscientiously listen to what is being said. This action in itself helps defuse the situation, as does being open and honest when giving a reply. Often, if a reasonable explanation for police actions is provided, citizens understand and are satisfied, but this is not always the outcome.

Law enforcement officers have a great deal of discretion in handling conflicts. In fact, patrol officers exercise more discretion in performing their daily tasks than managers do. Sometimes officers make incorrect decisions. If a mistake is made, the officer should admit it and state that corrective action will be made. If otherwise, a manager should explain to the public why the officer's action or the agency's policy was correct. In either case, it is important to always communicate with the public because they are truly the customers of the police agency.

References


