

Reader Views

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7101 Hwy 71 W #200

Austin, Texas 78735

512/288-8555

admin@readerviews.com

www.readerviews.com

Interview with William E. Cooper

Author of *Leading Beyond Tradition: A Breakthrough Strategy for Law Enforcement*

Reader Views is very excited to be talking with Bill Cooper, a retired Chief of Police and author of the new groundbreaking book “Leading Beyond Tradition: A Breakthrough Strategy for Law Enforcement.”

Juanita: Thank you for joining us today Bill. Your book, “Leading Beyond Tradition: A Breakthrough Strategy for Law Enforcement” revolutionizes the efficiency and effectiveness of current day law enforcement. Please tell us the inspiration for writing your book?

Bill: After many years in policing it became more and more apparent that in spite of the truly outstanding officers our departments have, the outcomes law enforcement produces year after year in return for the investments made in it were, at best, low, far lower than an acceptable level. Law enforcement produces less than a 20% case closure rate every year, and there is a growing belief that the police cannot protect people, that the police react only after an incident occurs. Yet law enforcement has the most educated, sophisticated officers in its history and the gap grows. The basic question is why this happens. It is my belief that the people have an absolute right to expect the best from their police, and the police have an absolute obligation to deliver it. Yet improvements in the metrics do not occur and every year departments ask for more resources and more staff to handle growing workloads.

By investigating activity levels departments react to, I learned that in most cases 50% - 70% of calls for service officers were responding to, had no relationship to the mission of policing. In addition, the majority of calls being made to 911 centers had no relationship to emergent circumstances. In effect we were creating a world where no matter what the problem someone had, by calling 911 someone else – the police – would deal with it. With the larger percentage of time spent on non-mission oriented incidents, officers are unable to deploy to law enforcement problems in many cases.

As the Chief of Police it was my responsibility to seek solutions, to provide the quality of life the community deserves, using the outstanding resources we already possess. Using the graduate education I had in business and public administration, I sought a completely

new and proactive approach to policing. I felt that major progress could be made in reducing crime, reducing calls for service, and stabilizing staffing levels and the annual budget. I believed that other outcomes would be enhanced credibility, cross-organizational collaboration opportunities, and the ability to partner with the community in a far more effective and efficient manner was entirely possible. I believed that a new management model was necessary and built one, using business principles law enforcement had either used sparingly or not at all.

I wrote this book to benefit the officers and citizens they are dedicated to protecting.

Juanita: It is incredible to hear that 50%-70% of all 911 calls are not emergencies, and most not even problems dealt with by the police force. Why do you think the public has abused this crucial system to this extent?

Bill: Actually, 50% - 70% of the calls for service are unrelated to the mission of policing. It is not a function of abuse. It is how law enforcement has, and has been allowed to evolve. There have been few efforts to remediate this part of policing.

Juanita: You have combined the highly successful Six Sigma and CompStat business principles along with community involvement into your new management approach. Can you give us some background on these principles?

Bill: Six Sigma is a process improvement methodology driven by thorough statistical analysis of data to determine root causes of defects. In my opinion it is the most powerful management system ever developed. Major corporations in the last 10 years have reduced internal costs due to defects, and improved profits, by more than \$100 billion. The methodology was developed by the Motorola Company in the mid-1980's to address defective products. Achieving great success, the model was implemented at General Electric under Jack Welch, and large-scale improvements and profits were added to their story. Six Sigma had never been applied to law enforcement, so I initiated this process improvement within the department. Our goal of improvements was expected to reduce internal redundancies and re-works, freeing up resources and personnel to deploy to mission oriented activities, such as attacking crime. I call this an infusion of capital in the department.

CompStat is a management system using data to identify police problems, and measuring results through problem solving efforts. Data collected is analyzed, mapped, and returned to the field in near real time with the intent of developing strategies and tactics to deploy to and resolve the problems and achieve measurable results. CompStat was developed in the mid-1990's by then New York City Police Commissioner Bill Bratton. The initial application of CompStat to a city deemed ungovernable resulted in a 39% decrease in serious crime and a 50% reduction in murders. NYPD's achievements during this time period were three times the national average. Other jurisdictions implemented the systems with matching results and it has evolved into city-wide operations, including the City of Baltimore.

Community involvement is a powerful asset and progressive Community Policing strategy. Traditional community policing is program-based with few actual successful outcomes. There are many programs focused on partnering the police with the community, but there has been little reduction in crime directly attributable to them. It is the premise of this book that a far more effective approach is required. The book

describes the fact that 50% - 70% of calls for service are not related to the reason the police exist. One aspect of my Six Sigma and CompStat model involves identifying activities that either are not, or should not, use law enforcement resources and can be equally, or better, handled by other organizations or the community itself. By involving the community in policing itself with the more minor incidents, police resources are freed to focus on true law enforcement mission oriented activities. The approach is to identify the various neighborhoods in the jurisdiction and educate the residents and business owners in how to deal with the issues themselves – or before calling 911. If departments simply ask the people for help, they'll get it.

Juanita: How have you integrated these together to modernize the existing model?

Bill: By combining the three-part approach the department realizes real and measurable results. The expected outcome is to return real results in crime reduction, calls for service, and the ability to stabilize staffing levels and the annual budget, all at the same time partnering with the community that invests in the department to enhance its quality of life. By using the model the department truly produces dramatic results.

Juanita: Change can be challenging for people and organizations that have been doing things the same way for a long time. How easy is the transition from the traditional approach to a more holistic management style?

Bill: You are so right – change is a challenge, no less so in law enforcement. The police have not generally changed their methodologies and operations in many decades, and the outcomes produced are consistently low. Departments are typically resistant, but I've completed several projects and case studies to demonstrate the wins the model offers. I've also developed training on how to implement the model, with performance measures and a performance scorecard to document results. With any new approach, there is a need to establish its credibility and demonstrate its success. We're doing that. This is a powerful system that translates into powerful results.

Juanita: What are some of the success stories regarding the application of your new model?

Bill: The Seattle Police Department retained me to train its command staff in the model, then complete projects to demonstrate success. One example deals with a one-page document all departments in the state are required to complete. It is a simple approval or denial of an annual liquor license. The city has more than 2000 establishments and the process for approval was extensive. The project calculated the annual cost at more than \$177,000. on completion the cost had been reduced to \$15,000, saving the department some \$162,000 annually. The dollars and resources freed are now being used on mission-oriented activities, the infusion of capital I spoke of earlier. This is one process involving one piece of paper. Imagine what could be done over time internally. Another case involves a complete assessment of a small town department, with organizational strategies and the development of a 5-year plan around the model.

Other benefits of the model include improved morale of the staff as they are focused on issues related to why they came to policing, improved credibility of the department since they are returning visible results, a true partnership with the citizens and many more pairs of eyes looking for real police problems, the ability of the city or county to take the

dollars the police department would have requested and apply them to other local priorities, and a myriad of process improvements. There are many other examples.

Juanita: What is the direction “Leading Beyond Tradition” takes regarding community policing and citizen involvement?

Bill: As we discussed earlier a key component is coordinating and partnering with the community, or in the case of the private sector, the employees. Recalling that a large percentage of activity the police deal with is not related to their mission, the question arises on how to remediate that. I learned quickly that if we educate the community and the public on these issues, and simply ask them for their help, we’ll get it in most cases. By reducing the numbers and types of events officers deal with, we free up resources to apply to great needs. We create friends and partners, more people willing to get involved and contribute to their own quality of life. Another tremendous outcome is that by freeing resources to attack mission-oriented events and reducing others, we are able to stabilize the staffing levels and budget of the department. Imagine going into the city council at budget time and saying we don’t need any more officers and we don’t need increases in budget. Instantaneous credibility!

Juanita: This would undoubtedly prove the credibility and integrity of your strategy. What would you say to people that have concerns with community policing and feel this type of involvement could potentially lead to privacy issues, abuses of power, etc.?

Bill: It is all about partnering the citizens with their police, making the community safer and this part of the government more efficient and effective with the taxpayer’s dollars. By involving the citizens with the police the department becomes much more transparent. The people actually get to see what the police do, leading to a better understanding of what’s done and how it’s done. A deliberate by-product is that trust is enhanced when there is an understanding of what really goes on, and why.

Juanita: Your new model is geared towards law enforcement. Can the processes outlined in your book be applied to the achievement of success in any service relation organization?

Bill: This model can be applied in any organization, and significant outcomes and successes can be realized. While the book has an emphasis on policing, the content will work in any organization, regardless of its charter, service or other wise. Six Sigma is used in many product and service organizations. CompStat has been historically used in service organizations, but can be applied elsewhere by simply changing the metrics to be tracked using existing data sets. Community involvement is changed to employee involvement. I did this in both public and private sector institutions with excellent results.

Juanita: Bill, you have a long history in this arena - law enforcement, business and public administration, teaching leadership courses, etc. Please tell us your 30+ years of experience that has refined your expertise in this field.

Bill: My career has been a very positive and rewarding set of experiences. I have had the privilege of serving in nearly all aspects of policing in several very fine organizations. I have had the honor of leading departments both in the public and private sectors and have achieved many and profound successes. I’ve received truly outstanding education and

training and have taught thousands of law enforcement professionals around the country whom I consider some of the finest people in the country. I also teach graduate school courses in leadership, organizational development, and how to build high performance organizations. I have been very fortunate to be involved with the business professionals and public service professionals this country produces, people who get the job done every day, people with high standards and integrity. I am proud to represent them and have my name associated with them. I have learned as much or more from them as they from me. I firmly believe that organizations are populated with great people and by working with and through them there is little that cannot be accomplished.

Juanita: Thank you for talking with us today Bill. We have thoroughly enjoyed hearing more about your revolutionary new approach to Law Enforcement. Please let your readers know how they may contact you or find out more about “Leading Beyond Tradition.” (website)

Bill: I may be reached at www.leadingbeyondtradition.com, or by phone at 425-275-7665. I offer keynote addresses, speaking engagements, and training in the model, both in law enforcement and in the business community, where this model also applies.

Juanita: Do you have any last thoughts you would like to share with your readers?

Bill: I am grateful to you and your organization for the opportunity to chat with you about the model and the book. Law enforcement is populated by some of the finest people in America and given the chance to legitimately participate in the development and operation of the departments would produce outcomes with the citizens unlike any time in our history. These officers, and our citizens are truly good people who look only for making it better. I am honored to have spent the time with you and thank you sincerely.