

Courageous Leadership

Launching a New, Dynamic Police Department in Menifee, California



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Launching a New, Dynamic Police Department in Menifee, California: A Case Study

Teaching Plan

Introduction

This teaching plan is provided for use with the case study, “Courageous Leadership: Launching a New, Dynamic Police Department in Menifee, California: A Case Study.” This case focuses on issues of leadership, ethics, and police culture for students of public safety, public administration, and criminal justice.

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Learning Objectives

This case is designed to guide students through the considerations involved in deciding between the contracted model of policing and starting a municipal police department, including importance of recruiting a police chief who meets the unique needs of a healthy, service-centric police department. Along the way, the case reveals specific actions taken to deliver regular, visionary, transparent relationship-building communication with the community and city council members.

Positioning

This case was developed for the Center for Homeland Defense and Security in Monterey, California, and was designed for students pursuing futures in public safety and criminal justice leadership. This case focuses identifiable acts of courageous leadership while considering three of the recommended steps taken in the process of establishing a new police department by the Office of Community Oriented Policing Services (COPS): (1) making the decision to launch, (2) conducting the strategic analysis, and (3) hiring a police chief. This case was built to be used in courses focusing on leadership, communication, ethics, public policy, criminal justice, and policing.



Synopsis

Contrary to current calls to defund the police, the City of Menifee, California, officially launched a new police department July 1, 2020. The decision to build a new public safety workforce is the result of steadily increasing contract costs with the local Sheriff’s Department and the rapid growth the city has been experiencing since its official incorporation in 2008. Amidst pressure from the Sheriff’s Department to remain on contract, requests to join an eleven-city police cooperative, and in the wake of a dangerous police reform project in Calexico, California, newly-minted City Manager Armando Villa stepped forward and accepted the additional responsibility and workload required to build a new police department.

The case begins with an examination of early steps taken in the strategic analysis, as recommended in the COPS publication on how to launch a police department (Spence, Webster, & Connors, 2006). Concerns about Villa’s experience arose in light of the choice he made in hiring a police chief, who retired more than 40 years ago, to conduct the feasibility study. The viability of his plan to create a healthy police culture, which existed in skeletal form after receiving the feasibility report, rested on (1) his ability to communicate an inspirational vision using facts supporting the practicality of the venture. and (2) the recruitment of a local, trusted, and recently retired chief of police to help him recruit the right workforce for the unique department.

The case continues to document the journey from unanimous vote of confidence by the city council through the recruitment of the most important position in the department: the chief. Along the way, Villa’s ability to anticipate and navigate adversity reveals a rare form of courageous leadership. Using Rijamampianina’s (2018) research into the drivers of courage, the intrinsic

and external motivators that build and reveal bold, visionary leaders become readily apparent and ultimately act as attractors of the likeminded. The result of which is a legacy of courageous leadership existing in the new, dynamic culture of policing now active in Menifee, California.

Discussion Plan

This discussion plan is a guide for navigating the case study with students. By the end of the case, students should be able to answer the following questions:

1. Using the case study description and the attached Menifee flyer, describe the ideal police department culture for this “premiere” city of the future.
2. Create a paragraph describing the ideal Menifee police officer. What kind of police chief would need to be recruited for your *ideal* officer?
3. Identify examples of internal and external drivers of courage as identified by Rijamampianina’s (2018) (Table 1).

Discussion Timeline

Introduction: Framing the Opportunity...	5 minutes
Visualizing the Ideal Police Culture.....	25 minutes
Identifying the Ideal Police Chief.....	20 minutes
<i>Optional Large Group Discussion.....</i>	15 minutes
Recognizing Internal and External Drivers of Courage.....	30 minutes
Conclusion: Establishing a Legacy of Courageous Leadership.....	5 minutes



Introduction: Framing the Opportunity

In 2011, Nelligan and Bourns conducted a research study which examined the effectiveness of contracted policing in the state of California, where nearly 30% of the cities receive public safety services from regional Sheriff's Departments. Contract cities are generally younger, less dense, less populous, wealthier, and have lower rates of reported crime. Interestingly, the standard contract city pays less for police services while seeing higher clearance rates for violent crimes and the same clearance rates for property crimes as their municipal policing counterparts. Even with that data, there are times when building a police department best suits the needs of a contract city. This is the case in Menifee, California.

Menifee is young, wealthy, and has lower rates of reported crime. What sets them apart from other contract cities is their tremendous and speedy growth pattern. From 2008 when they were officially incorporated to 2018 when the question of alternative policing options arose, their population has more than doubled. Along with this incredible growth comes a vision of Menifee as a premiere city where businesses thrive and families raise their children in safety and security. To provide its citizens this kind of vision, the city leaders must take fiscal responsibility seriously and have the ability to influence the kind of police services they believe are ideal for the community. Contracting, they determined - while certainly simpler than the alternative - offered little in the way of oversight and quality control. Their feasibility research concluded that they could build a police department that provided for the dynamic, ever-changing needs of their growing community.

At the helm of leadership for Menifee is City Manager Armando Villa. His background in urban planning perfectly positioned him to help with the

massive growth and expansion. When he accepted the job late in 2017, the focal point of his new job was on the design plan for the area and its necessary infrastructure. Starting a police department was not on his radar. However, innovation is at the forefront of his professional practice so when the data revealed that Menifee stood to build something that could provide more and excellent service at a lower expense than they had been paying, Villa accepted the city council's challenge and set out to build something better than had ever been built before.

Visualizing the Ideal Police Culture

To prepare for this activity, students should read pages 1-12 of the associated case study.

Armando Villa served in city leadership in Calexico, California, prior to coming to Menifee. In 2013, Calexico city employees were investigated by the FBI for corrupt business and policing practices. To add insult to injury, the city was nearing bankruptcy. The resulting Department of Justice consent decree placed the city under strict obligation to prove itself capable of operating ethically in every way. Villa, an immigrant to Calexico from Mexico as a 4th grader, returned out of a sense of obligation to help his American hometown rebound. His decision meant reforming the police department, changing salary structures, renegotiating contracts, and being strict with accountability practices. Along the way, he made plenty of enemies in the law enforcement community, but he learned that the good cops supported his efforts - which made the threats, fear, and vulnerability he felt worth it.

When the decision was made to start a new department in Menifee, Villa chose to see it as an opportunity to create something different than



existed anywhere else. To begin the task, he chose two trusted professionals – his assistant city manager and a recently-retired police chief from a nearby city – to serve alongside him in this endeavor. Their early conversations focused solely on describing the ideal police department to serve the needs of the city. To do this well, they started by describing what they envisioned in the city once the department would be launched. By looking into the future, they were able to anticipate a list of wants and needs and then work backward from there to describe the kind of law enforcement culture they wanted to build.

Discussion Questions:

1. Break up into small groups of 6-8 people.
2. Using the attached flyer describing the city of Menifee, California, create a statement that describes the type of police culture your group believes would best serve the community.
3. Choose a group spokesperson to share your cultural descriptor with the larger group.
4. Allow time for large group to consider presentations.

Identifying the Ideal Police Chief

To prepare for this activity, students should read pages 13-25 of the associated case study.

Once the trio determined that the culture they were looking to build had to be service-centric, dynamic rather than monolithic, and a reflection of the family-oriented city's culture, the next step was to begin searching for a police chief. Again, they worked backward in creating their job description. Rather than starting with the ideal police chief candidate though, they started with the ideal police

officer. Instinctively, they understood that leadership begets leadership and, if they succeeded in choosing the right kind of chief they would pave the way for police officers with the right kind of attitudes and experience to make the lateral move to Menifee from departments where they ostensibly are happily employed.

Discussion Questions:

1. Break up into small groups of 6-8 people.
2. Create a list of qualities and characteristics describing the ideal Menifee police officer.
3. What kind of police chief would need to be recruited to lead the department in order to recruit your ideal officer?
4. Share your description of the ideal officer and chief with the larger group.

Optional Large Group Discussion:

1. How is hiring a chief to build a department different than hiring a chief to take over responsibility for an existing department?

Recognizing Internal and External Drivers of Courage

To complete this activity, students will need to have the associated case study available to reference.

Leadership studies have long identified the invaluable nature of the creation of a legacy of leadership. Furthermore, courageous acts of leadership are frequently characterized as essential to the requirement of authenticity. As a component of values-based leadership, authenticity and courage must exist or ethical failures, ego, and self-centered decisions erode the quality of leadership provided and begin to have a negative impact on everyone within reach of the leader's influence.



Discussion Questions:

1. Break up into small groups of 6-8 people, or work independently.
2. Identify examples from the case study of internal and external drivers of courage as identified in Rijamampianina's (2018) table.
3. Identify examples in the case study of the actions that were taken for each of the internal and external drivers identified in #2.
4. Create a master list from individual or group responses.
5. Discuss as a class.

Wrap-Up

In Menifee, there is a unique legacy that surfaced as an overarching theme of the case study. In

unanimously supporting the opportunity to provide a high quality of service to their community while being pressured from surrounding communities and the Sheriff's Department to maintain the status quo, the city council set the tone for a series of decisions to follow that showed courageous leadership. From this decision came another courageous choice from City Manager Armando Villa to create something innovative, dynamic, and restructured from the existing models of policing. His choice of police chief continued the legacy. Future case study analysis will highlight the type of officer identified and recruited by Chief Walsh. Again, their characteristics are aligned with those of the chief, city manager, and city council. The result is a foundation of public safety leadership that, if pursued as passionately as the department's inception has been, will provide Menifee with a healthy, service-centric police force for years to come.



References

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