The Effect of Agency Traits on Recruitment and Retention for Deputy Sheriff Positions in Wisconsin

by

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ABSTRACT

This research study examines which organizational traits in sheriff's departments throughout Wisconsin attract the most highly qualified candidates, and help to retain high functioning employees.

The major objective of this study was to identify which organizational traits were identified as being most important to two specific groups of law enforcement officers. The first group consisted of the most recently hired officers within the agency who would represent the population of employees who were most recently recruited by their agency. The second group consisted of the department training officers, who represent the population of employees who the department should strive to retain.

A survey tool was developed to determine which organizational traits appealed to the new hires and department trainers individually and within their respective groups. A

portion of the survey contained demographic information allowing the researcher to break down the information into sub groups based on specific demographic criteria.

Findings from this research revealed a possible emerging trend involving health care benefits as being one of the most desirable traits that an agency can offer. Department leadership and wages were also identified as important organizational traits that were found to be among the most desired by the respondents. As anticipated, certain demographic groups had slightly different priorities regarding what types of traits they look for in an agency.

Recommendations from this research include tailoring departmental benefits and traits around the types of employees that an agency wishes to attract and retain. The group of new hires and the group of trainers agreed that health benefits now, health benefits on retirement, and department leadership were the most important traits that an organization could offer. In order to attract and retain the most qualified law enforcement officers, agencies need to focus their attention on providing the benefits and developing the organizational traits that these highly sought after employees desire.

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The foundation for this study comes from an overwhelming desire to provide the finest quality officers for a profession and a country that deserve nothing less. The trust placed in law enforcement officers by the communities in which we serve, must be protected by officers who are passionate about what they do.

Special thanks to Oneida County Sheriff Jeff Hoffman who supported the research conducted in this project. I would also like to make a special dedication to the late Sheriff Tim Miller. Tim's belief in me and the benefits that continued education provide to our department and community is what enabled me to begin this journey. I could never have done this without his support.

My advisor, Dr. Kat Lui, has been unbelievably responsive to my constant requests and need for special accommodations since I enrolled in this program. She has set an example of professionalism that I shall always strive for.

Finally, to my family who is always supportive and is the wind beneath my wings. Foremost, constant support throughout my studies and this research project was found in my children. Ben, Emma, and Sophie unselfishly gave up time with their father so that his dream might be realized. I love you all.

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Chapter I: Introduction

The measure of any law enforcement agency should be the quality of the officers that are employed by the agency. The ability to attract and maintain high quality officers should be one of the highest priorities for any law enforcement agency. The career of a law enforcement officer could span over 30 years. Therefore it is of the utmost importance for an agency to attract and retain the best employees possible. The purpose of this paper will be to identify some of the key traits that attract superior candidates to law enforcement agencies, as well as traits that allow an agency to retain these candidates.

Agencies that view the people working for them as their greatest asset realize the importance of recruiting and maintaining high quality employees. Recruitment of qualified candidates for law enforcement positions can be one of the greatest challenges faced by a law enforcement agency. Due to the difficult screening process, over 90 percent of applicants will be rejected during the selection process (Woska, 2006). In November of 2005, the Windsor Connecticut Police Department had 176 applicants respond to their recruitment efforts. Of the 176 applicants, 40 candidates showed up for testing, and only 12 applicants were able to pass the fitness requirements. Eventually, all of the 176 candidates were eliminated from consideration for hire (Gentile, 2006). Projections nationwide estimate that between 2002 and 2012 the United States will need 37,700 new police officers, in addition to the 30,300 positions needed to replace retirees and other persons leaving employment (Woska, 2006).

Many businesses, including law enforcement agencies, have a limited number of applicants that respond to their advertisements in newspapers, professional journals, or

other media used to advertise job openings. It is very important for organizations to try to identify the target population of desirable employees and based on the views of this group, and whenever possible, to tailor an organization comprised of the traits sought by top of the line applicants. Since many agencies retain an employee for their entire career, it is extremely important to hire an employee who strengthens the agency. Based on the cost to replace an employee, it is also vitally important for an agency to retain employees who the agency has invested in. This paper will identify some of the key traits that attract superior candidates to apply for a job with an agency, as well as traits which allow an agency to retain these candidates.

Statement of the Problem

Attract and retain employees based on providing key organizational traits desirable to the most highly qualified candidates.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to determine the key organizational traits that attract the most qualified individuals to apply for positions with law enforcement agencies, as well as traits that allow organizations to retain valued employees. This paper will enable departments to focus on the benefits, organizational traits, and working conditions that these individuals desire, making it easier to attract and retain the most qualified candidates. The information from this study can be used to drive the development of policy and decision making that will directly affect the climate of law enforcement agencies.

Through the study findings, department leaders can make educated decisions related to recruitment and retention, which will build a stronger department at the micro

level. A stronger department at the micro level will lead to providing greater services to the community in which the officers serve at the macro level. A stronger community will proliferate throughout adjoining communities, and help to build a stronger society at the mega level.

The data collected for this study will come from a survey sent to each of the 72 sheriff's departments in Wisconsin. The inclusion of all of the sheriff's departments will provide an excellent cross section of attitudes throughout Wisconsin. Wisconsin law enforcement is made up of 72 sheriff's departments, as well as various state, city, town and village police agencies. The sheriff's departments were chosen because they represent a statewide group performing similar job duties. Each county in Wisconsin has a sheriff's department, which by state statute is given authority to provide law enforcement services within that county. The office of Sheriff is created by Article 6, Section 4 of the Wisconsin Constitution, and the specific duties of the Sheriff are set forth in Chapter 59 of Wisconsin statutes. The Sheriff is an elected position in each county with each sheriff serving a four-year term. The duties of Wisconsin sheriff's departments are similar to all other law enforcement agencies in Wisconsin in that they enforce state statutes pertaining to criminal law violations, and traffic law violations. Sheriff's department officers also enforce county ordinance violations where applicable, provide courthouse security, transport prisoners, serve legal notices, and provide detention services within the county jail. Many of these functions are unique to sheriff's departments in Wisconsin, and are not carried out by other police agencies.

The sheriff's departments in Wisconsin provide police services in a variety of urban and rural law enforcement settings. The data collected in this study will be

gathered from all areas of Wisconsin, and will provide an overall view of attitudes from officers throughout the state including those working in primarily rural settings, and those working in predominantly urban settings.

The information gathered through this research will be made available to all law enforcement agencies in Wisconsin in order to build stronger departments. This research will enable agencies to hire and retain more qualified officers and as a result of this to build stronger communities.

This study is important for all departments, in that the information obtained can be used to develop policy and work environments in which officers thrive and look forward to a long, successful career. If this is not achieved, there will be a great deal of stress placed on the individual officer, the department, and the community. This stress may come in the form of economic factors related to retraining and covering vacancies with overtime, workload pressure on the officers, and increased negativity. It is estimated that the cost of replacing an employee can be close to 50 percent of the departing employees' salary (Price, 2007). Based on this fact alone, law enforcement administrators need to work diligently to create a work atmosphere that embraces the employee and creates a desire for the employee to remain with the department.

Assumptions of Study

It is assumed at the onset of this study that there will be common traits that draw the most sought after candidates to a department. This study is based on the premise that highly qualified applicants for law enforcement positions will desire similar characteristics in a department that persons currently employed in these positions desire.

It is assumed that the group of most recently hired employees surveyed will represent the attitudes of highly sought after candidates that an agency is trying to recruit. It is also assumed that the group of department trainers will represent the attitudes of high performing employees that an agency is hoping to retain.

Another assumption would be that the survey instrument is given to the proper officers within the departments. The directions provided to the sheriff's would ask that one copy of the survey instrument be given to the most recently hired deputy, and the other copy be given to the department's lead training officer. It is assumed that the sheriff will provide copies of the survey to the correct employees.

Definition of Terms

Protective Service Classification: "Wisconsin retirement system members who are classified protective category employees are law enforcement personnel, including correctional officers, and firefighters" (http://etf.wi.gov/glossary.htm#P).

Macro Level Elements: "Results delivered to external clients" (Kaufman, 2003 p. 65)

Mega Level Elements: "The social impact and value added to society" (Kaufman, 2003 p. 65)

Micro Level Elements: "Results delivered to individuals or teams. Results delivered to internal customers" (Kaufman, 2003 p. 65)

Trait: "A distinguishing quality" (Webster, 2002, p.2424).

For the purpose of this study organizational traits are distinguishing qualities of an organization, such as benefits, systems, cultures and attitudes.

Methodology

A focus group will be used to develop a survey instrument relating to the correlation between agency traits and how desirable these traits are to applicants for law enforcement positions. This study will be based on data gathered through the use of this survey instrument. Chapter III will describe in detail the research methods used in this project, including the selection of subjects, how the survey instrument was developed, the data collection procedures, and how the data was analyzed. Chapter III will also provide rationale for why these methods were chosen, and why the methods contribute to the collection and analysis of valid data.

Chapter II: Review of Literature

The problem being addressed is the need to attract and retain employees based on providing key traits desirable to the most highly qualified candidates. A great deal of literature has been published based on the techniques used to recruit law enforcement officers. This study will focus primarily on the way in which organizations can build themselves around the type of employee that they wish to employ. A search of the current literature on this topic reveals that this area of research is wide open for exploration. A similar study has been done by Cooper & Ingram (2004) in which factors were studied for their relation to the resignation or transfer of employment in ten police forces in the United Kingdom. Douglas Yearwood (2004) authored an article detailing the results of a study done in North Carolina that also provided valuable information in linking attrition from agencies with a cause for leaving.

The goal of the literature review is to provide an insight into what has been researched in this area, and to use this information as a foundation for this study. Studies that have been conducted on why an employee leaves an agency can be used in this study to determine what benefits or traits an agency lacked, resulting in the loss of an employee. Police Departments in the United States report an average loss of one officer per year (Koper, 2001). More than 80 percent of the nation's 17,000 law enforcement agencies have police officer positions that they cannot fill (Woska, 2006).

The idea that employees are drawn to agencies that offer certain benefits is prevalent throughout the literature. Some of the most commonly cited reasons for seeking employment in a different agency were the desire to move to a different area, and the desire for different housing (Cooper & Ingram 2004).

Benefits such as the amount of wages received by an employee may be thought to be the greatest factor in attracting and retaining employees. The research reviewed was not conclusive regarding the effect of wages on the ability to recruit and retain employees. Employees who believe that they are receiving equal pay to others doing the same work do not typically cite pay as a reason for dissatisfaction or turnover (Price, 2007). However, the U.K. study found that only fourteen percent of respondents cited inadequate pay as a reason for resigning or transferring from an agency (Cooper & Ingram, 2004). On the other hand, a 1998-2002 study done in North Carolina identified low or inequitable salary and compensation packages as a major deterrent keeping excellent candidates from applying for entry-level positions (Yearwood, 2004). Bowman (2006) found that 29 respondents, or 63 percent of the population surveyed, identified pay as a primary motivator for leaving employment with their previous law enforcement agency in order to work for the F.B.I. These respondents did not report leaving their previous agency because they felt they were not receiving what they deserved or because they felt they were not fairly rewarded.

In one study, lack of training opportunities was found to be the number one reason that officers defected from smaller police departments, with low wages running a close second (Warrell, 2000).

Another significant reason that officers are leaving agencies is tied directly to the lack of support that they feel they receive, and the working relationship that they have with their immediate supervisor (Cooper & Ingram 2004). Management must realize the direct impact they have on employee satisfaction and loyalty. Schreiber (2000) stated, "Leadership that encourages effectively retains employees" (p.2).

There are certain factors that the agency has no control over, such as geographical location, climate, and to some extent number of sworn officers. It is important to identify the attitudes that prospective employees have regarding these topics in order to gauge if their opinions have a factual basis. It would be important to present the facts regarding these topics in recruitment literature in order to avoid the pitfall of misinformation.

Other factors are difficult to control, such as budget, size of the department, and availability of special assignments. In the North Carolina study, 80.6 percent of the respondents cited agency budget restrictions as a barrier to recruiting. This same study indicated that the number one reason that officers left an agency was based on budget restrictions (Yearwood, 2004).

In the study done in North Carolina, 37.9 percent of the respondents identified agency size as a barrier to recruiting. This same study found that larger police agencies reported an average attrition rate of 10.2 percent compared to18.2 percent reported by smaller agencies (Yearwood, 2004). A study conducted in Pennsylvania supported the North Carolina findings, determining that smaller agencies are two times more likely than a larger agency to lose an officer to another agency (Koper, 2001).

The North Carolina study reported that lateral transfers to other law enforcement agencies accounted for 81-100% of the reason that officers left their department (Yearwood, 2004). Based on this high percentage of defection to other agencies, it is important to determine what the other agencies are offering that was more attractive to the officer.

The literature reviewed indicates that retention efforts need to be bolstered to address employees in their first three years of employment. In the North Carolina study,

the average length of employment with an agency was 34 months before deciding to leave the agency (Yearwood, 2004).

College education has become a focus of police recruiting in the last couple of decades. The average educational level of police officers has grown from a high school education to a more recent average of nearly two years of college (Cordner, Scarborough and Sheehan, 2004). The literature did not support a direct link between educational level and the rate of attrition from an agency. Yearwood (2004) states;

> The North Carolina Survey found that agency attrition rates are not significantly related to minimum educational requirements. Agencies with low and high turnover rates do not differ in their entry-level educational requirements. In other words, police officers that hold a high school diploma are no more likely to remain with an agency than officers holding higher educational credentials. Contrary to popular assumptions officers who hold higher educational credentials are not leaving the agency at a higher rate than their counterparts who possess the high school diploma. (p.4)

Effective employee recruitment and selection is the first step in a successful retention program. Effective employee retention starts with recruiting, screening, interviewing and hiring. The fact that less time needs to be spent on recruitment will allow leaders to aggressively work on employee development and internal promotions (Schrieber, 2000).

Chapter III: Methodology

The purpose of this paper will be to identify some of the key organizational traits that attract highly qualified candidates to apply for employment with an agency, as well as traits which allow an agency to retain these candidates. This chapter will detail the research methods used in this project, including subject selection, instrumentation, data collection procedures, and data analysis.

Subject selection and description

This study lends itself perfectly to the use of a focus group, and distribution of a survey instrument. The focus group can be used to identify the elements to be used in the survey instrument, and can serve as a pilot group for the instrument. The survey will be an excellent research tool used to reach many people from a large geographic area at less cost than it would take to call or meet with them individually. The survey can promise and deliver anonymity and permit respondents time to carefully consider their responses.

The seventy two sheriff's departments in Wisconsin were selected to take part in this study in an attempt to draw data from like environments, while still getting responses from all areas of the State of Wisconsin. The surveys were mailed directly to the sheriff of each of the 72 counties with a cover letter introducing the project and asking for the cooperation of each department. The letter advised the sheriff's that the results of this project would be shared with each department in a hope that the departments would be able to use the information to bolster existing recruitment and retention strategies.

Two main groups, new hires, and department trainers, were targeted for this research. It is anticipated that the responses of the most recently hired officers will provide insight regarding which organizational traits appealed to these employees to

encourage them to seek employment with their current department. The second group, the department trainers, is made up of a group of employees who typically have been with the department for a long period of time, and are the most trusted and respected members of the department. It is hoped that the group of trainers can provide information on which organizational traits led them to remain with the department long enough to develop this status within the department.

Instrumentation

A survey instrument was developed specifically for this research. In order to design an efficient survey tool, a focus group was used to determine the ideal traits a department would possess to make it appealing to the finest candidates. The focus group consisted of three training officers from the Oneida County Sheriff's Department, as well as the three most recently hired officers who were currently participating in the field-training program. The focus group was asked to identify the organizational traits that an ideal department would possess, and what factors would promote an exceptional environment for recruiting and retaining officers. The training officers and new hires provided a list of traits that they felt were the most important to them when deciding where they wished to work. The traits that were identified by the majority of the focus group were included in the survey instrument.

The first 15 items on the survey were personal preference questions that identified specific organizational traits. This set of questions was broken down into two parts. Part one of the question identified the respondents attitudes towards the organizational trait at first hire, while part two of the question identified how the respondent felt about the organizational trait at the time they were filling out the survey.

A Likert scale using a 1 through 5 point rating scale was used for this set of personal preference questions to gauge the respondent's attitude towards each specific organizational trait. A numerical rating of 1 indicated that the respondent felt that the organizational trait was "not important" to them, while a numerical rating of 5 indicated that the organizational trait was "very important" to them. The mean score given by the respondents would be used to rank which organizational traits were most important to the respondents.

The next item on the survey instrument was a fill in the blank personal preference question. This question asked the respondent to identify which of the 15 organizational traits identified in the first part of the survey would be most important to them when choosing an agency to work at. This question provided a method to check individual preference against the summative preference of the group of respondents. Due to the large number of surveys distributed, closed ended or forced choice questions were not used in the survey for ease of tabulation.

The survey concluded with seven questions identifying basic respondent demographic information dealing with experience, age, gender, department size, and educational level. These demographics were used to identify any correlation between them and the preferences towards certain organizational traits.

The survey instrument was then developed and this instrument was given to the focus group participants to complete as a pilot. Based on the feedback from the focus group participants, necessary changes were made to the survey instrument.

A cover letter was drafted which would be sent out with the survey. Oneida County Sheriff Jeff Hoffman agreed to sponsor the survey and allowed the use of Oneida

County Sheriff's Department letterhead and envelopes. The use of the Oneida County Sheriff's Department letterhead showed a direct tie to a Wisconsin sheriff's department, and helped to lend credibility to the project. The cover letter detailed the purpose of the study, how it would benefit the respondent as well as their agency, and offered a copy of summary of the findings to the sheriff's. The cover letter was signed by Oneida County Sheriff Jeff Hoffman, and requested assistance from his fellow sheriff's to support this research project.

As a pilot, the cover letter, implied consent notice, and the survey instrument were given to Sheriff Hoffman, the senior trainers, and the most recently hired deputy sheriffs at the Oneida County Sheriff's Department. By piloting the survey to local officers the researcher was able to determine if the instructions in the cover letter were clearly understood, and if the survey instrument would be understandable to the individuals who were required to complete it. Since the researcher is personally acquainted with these officers, the researcher was able to make the necessary changes to assure that the directions included in the cover letter would be clearly understood, and the requested steps were followed. Based on this information, changes were made to the cover letter, and the survey instrument.

Data collection procedures

Copies of the cover letter along with two copies of the 23 question survey instrument were then mailed to the all of the sheriff's departments in Wisconsin. The letter was addressed to the sheriff of each county and the instructions requested the sheriff to provide one copy of the survey to the most recently hired deputy sheriff on his department, and provide the other copy of the survey to a lead field training officer or

department training officer. Each respondent was requested to complete and return the survey by May 1, 2006. A self addressed stamped envelope was included with each survey for the respondent to return the survey to the researcher.

Included with the letter to the sheriff was a return postcard addressed to the researcher indicating that the sheriff of that respective county would like to receive a copy of the findings from the study. Those departments that did not return the survey by May 1, 2006, would be contacted and reminded to complete the surveys and return them no later than May 15, 2006.

If each department completed and returned the surveys, a total of 72 surveys from officers that had been recently hired, as well as 72 surveys from training officers would be available for data analysis. Based on the population size of 144 possible respondents, a sample size of 104 would provide an accuracy rate of $\pm$ 5%.

Data Analysis

When the completed surveys were received, the information was tabulated and the organizational traits that the respondents found to be most appealing were identified. The data received from the surveys represents descriptive and inferential statistical data from two primary groups. Group one represents the most recently hired officers believed to be indicative of the attitudes of employees who are being recruited, while group two represents the training officers, or the most qualified officers who agencies wish to retain. Each of these groups provided a stratified sampling of officers making up the 72 county sheriff's departments in Wisconsin. These groups were also broken down into subgroups identified by the descriptive demographic data including; years with current department,

years in law enforcement, gender, age, number of agencies worked for, department size, and level of education.

The data from the surveys was examined to identify the points of central tendency represented by the mode the median and the mean. The fact that the majority of the data from the survey was captured in the form of ordinal data, rank order correlation techniques were used to determine the extent of relationship between certain sets of variables.

Limitations of Study

This study was focused on all 72 Sheriff's Departments within Wisconsin. Each jurisdiction and department deals with a variety of factors in running the daily operations of the department. Due to the large number of sworn officers in Wisconsin, it would be unreasonable to attempt to study the attitudes of all of these officers. For this reason, the study was limited to sheriff's departments, and does not include attitudes of officers from other types of law enforcement agencies within Wisconsin.

Another limitation of the study is that the survey instrument developed did not offer open-ended questions as an option for response. This may have prevented the respondents from providing insight into factors that had not been considered by the researcher or the focus group members.

Chapter IV: Results

The purpose of this study was to identify some of the key traits that attract highly qualified candidates to apply for employment with an agency, as well as traits which allow an agency to retain these candidates.

Item Analysis

This chapter will describe the results of the survey. The data will be broken down between the two subject groups, the trainers, and the new hires. The data from the survey will be broken down further within the two main groups by demographic category to include; years with current department, number of years in law enforcement, gender, age, number of law enforcement agencies that the respondent has been employed by, size of current department, and education level. An analysis will be completed to compare rank order of preference for organizational traits based on the various demographics. Rank order correlation techniques will be used to point out relationships between certain sets of variables.

Packets were sent to all 72 of the county sheriff's in Wisconsin. The packets included a cover letter, two copies of the survey instrument, two copies of the informed consent notice, and a post card that the sheriff could use to request the results of this study. The sheriff's were asked to provide one copy of the survey and informed consent notice to their lead field training officer or department trainer, and the other copy of survey and informed consent notice to their most recently hired deputy.

The letter asked for a response to the survey by April 1, 2007. On April 19, 2007 Sheriff Hoffman sent a group email to the sheriff's thanking them for their response to the project, and asking those who had not responded to send back their completed

surveys. After this email was sent, two additional surveys were returned from the trainers, and two additional surveys were returned from new hires.

Of the 72 sheriff's, 44 returned the post card resulting in a 61% return rate of those sheriff's requesting to be furnished with the results of this study. Of the 72 training officers, 48 responded resulting in a 67% return rate. Of the 72 newly hired deputies, 46 responded resulting in a 64% return rate. A total of 19 departments did not respond to the study by returning the post card or either of the surveys. Overall, 74% of the departments responded by returning the post card, the trainer survey, or the new hire survey. Based on this rate of return this research project will have an accuracy rate of $\pm$6%.

Table 1 depicts the ranking of organizational traits that the trainers currently desire. Based on total points assigned through the mean score of the survey responses, the group of department trainers identified current health benefits, health benefits on retirement, department leadership, time off available, and equipment/duty gear as the five most important organizational traits respectively.

It is important to note that the trainers have ranked facilities, educational incentives, specialized assignments, and take home squads lowest on the list. The fact that these items are ranked so low might be due to the fact that the trainers are established within their organizations, and these types of organizational traits are already set by department culture, collective bargaining agreements, or are dictated by ever decreasing budgets. Table 7 reveals that the majority of the trainers that responded to the survey have been with their agency for 10 or more years. Many of these officers are no longer pursuing advanced degrees, which would explain why educational incentives are not as desirable.

Table 1

Mean preference score of organizational traits desired now by trainers

Organizational trait	Mean
Health Benefits Now	4.39
Health Benefits on Retirement Now	4.39
Department Leadership Now	4.35
Time Off Available Now	4.08
Equipment and Duty Gear Now	4
Support of Personal Needs Now	4
Work Schedule Now	3.95
Wages Now	3.93
Specialized training Now	3.93
Promotional Opportunities Now	3.79
Geographical Location Now	3.47
Take Home Squad Now	3.43
Specialized Assignments Now	3.39
Educational Incentives Now	3.22
Facilities Now	3.08

From the time that they were hired until the time that they were surveyed for this project, the priorities of the trainers have changed significantly. The only organizational traits that were listed in the top five when they were hired, and in the top five when they were surveyed were equipment/duty gear, and health insurance. Geographical location,

which was the number one trait when they were first hired as indicated in Table 2, did not even rank in the top five traits that the trainers currently desire. Health benefits on retirement is ranked number two currently, but was ranked number thirteen at first hire.

Table 2

Mean preference score of organizational traits desired at first hire by trainers

Organizational trait	Mean
Geographical Location At First Hire	3.22
Health Benefits At First Hire	3
Promotional Opportunities At First Hire	2.77
Equipment and Duty Gear At First Hire	2.75
Specialized Training At First Hire	2.75
Specialized Assignments At First Hire	2.70
Wages At First Hire	2.66
Department Leadership At First Hire	2.64
Support of Personal needs At First Hire	2.5
Educational Incentives At First Hire	2.41
Take Home Squad At First Hire	2.35
Work Schedule At First Hire	2.29
Health Benefits on Retirement At First Hire	2.16
Time Off Available At First Hire	2.08
Facilities At First Hire	2.02

When asked individually to pick the one most important benefit, the majority of department trainers identified current wages as being most important. The second highest ranked organizational traits were tied between current health benefits and health benefits on retirement. Table 3 depicts the individual preference of the trainers for specific traits.

Table 3

Individual preference of organizational traits desired by trainers

Organizational Trait	Number of individual responses
Wages	8
Department Leadership	8
Health Benefits	7
Health Benefits on Retirement	7
Geographical Location	5
Promotional Opportunities	2
Support of Personal needs	2
Specialized Assignments	1
Time Off Available	1
Facilities	0
Equipment and Duty Gear	0
Educational Incentives	0
Specialized Training	0
Work Schedule	0
Take Home Squad	0

It is important to note that current health insurance benefits and health benefits on retirement were the only organizational traits that were in the top five in both the Likert score responses, and in the individual preference response among the group of department trainers.

Table 4

Mean preference score of organizational traits desired now by new hires

Organizational trait	Mean
Health Benefits Now	4.28
Health Benefits on Retirement Now	4.08
Department Leadership Now	4.08
Equipment and Duty Gear Now	4.04
Specialized Assignments Now	3.89
Specialized training Now	3.89
Support of Personal Needs Now	3.89
Promotional Opportunities Now	3.76
Wages Now	3.71
Geographical Location Now	3.52
Work Schedule Now	3.43
Time Off Available Now	3.41
Educational Incentives Now	3.28
Facilities Now	2.93
Take Home Squad Now	2.93

Based on the mean score of the survey results, the new hire group identified current health benefits as being most important to them. Health benefits on retirement and department leadership were tied for second, with equipment/duty gear ranking third. Support of personal needs and specialized training were tied as the fourth most important benefit. The fifth most important benefit to the new hires was the opportunity for promotion.

Table 4 identifies take home squad, facilities, and educational incentives as the three lowest ranking organizational traits for the new hires. It should be noted that these traits were also listed among the lowest when ranked by the department trainers. This is an important fact to consider when an agency is required to prioritize which organizational traits they wish to develop within the organization. If decisions are being made to create an organization based on desirable traits, it might be advisable to put less emphasis on traits that are ranked lowest by both the trainer group and the new hire group.

Table 5 reveals that much like the trainers, the new hires ranked geographical location much higher at first hire than they did at the time they were filling out the survey. Since the majority of the new hire respondents have five or fewer years with their current department, this is a significant change in priorities. Geographical location seems to be a valuable tool for recruiting prospective hires, but the challenge to retain employees does not seem to focus as much on geographical location. Facilities, take home squad, and educational incentives remained among the least desirable traits that the new hires considered when looking at agencies in which they decided to seek employment.

Table 5

Mean preference score of organizational traits desired at first hire by new hires

Organizational trait	Mean
Health Benefits At First Hire	3.5
Department Leadership At First Hire	3.32
Geographical Location At First Hire	3.19
Support of Personal needs At First Hire	3.19
Health Benefits on Retirement At First Hire	3.15
Specialized Assignments At First Hire	3.13
Promotional Opportunities At First Hire	3.13
Specialized Training At First Hire	3.04
Equipment and Duty Gear At First Hire	3
Wages At First Hire	2.82
Time Off Available At First Hire	2.69
Work Schedule At First Hire	2.63
Educational Incentives At First Hire	2.58
Take Home Squad At First Hire	2.30
Facilities At First Hire	2.19

By comparing the mean score rankings in the responses of the group of new hires in Table 4 and Table 5 to the individual preference score in table 6, it is evident that health benefits is ranked as the most important benefit to this group. By individual preference, wages moved into a tie for the single most important benefit among the new

hires. This mirrors the response of the individual department trainers in table 3, who also chose wages as the single most important benefit to them individually.

When asked individually to pick the one most desirable benefit, the majority of the new hires identified wages tied with health benefits as being most important.

Table 6

Individual preference of organizational traits desired by new hires

Organizational trait	Number of individual responses
Wages	7
Health benefits	7
Geographical location	6
Specialized assignments	5
Department leadership	5
Promotional opportunities	2
Work schedule	2
Support of personal needs	2
Take home squad	2
Health benefits on retirement	1
Facilities	1
Equipment and duty gear	1
Educational incentives	1
Specialized training	0
Time off available	0

Table 6 indicates that geographical location, followed by department leadership and specialized assignments were also ranked high by the individual new hires. Table 4 reveals that geographical location was ranked as the number 10 most desired trait at the time the new hires were filling out the survey. This is much lower than it was ranked at first hire, and when ranked by the individual officers.

Throughout the research the lowest ranked organizational traits included; facilities, take home squads and educational incentives. This was evident not only between the trainer and new hire groups, but also within the different demographical subgroups of the two main groups.

A breakdown of the respondents between the different demographic categories is identified in tables 7 through 13.

Table 7

Breakdown of survey respondents based on years with current department

Years with current department	New Hires	Trainers
No Response	1	2
1 Year to 5 Years	40	3
5 Years to 10 Years	5	9
10 Years to 15 Years	0	11
15 Years to 20 Years	0	14
20 Years or More	0	9

All of the different subgroups of trainers based on years with their current department felt that health benefits were the most important organizational trait. Each of

these subgroups indicated that department leadership was among the top three of the most desirable traits. All of the groups with the exception of the 5 years to 10 years group identified time off available as the second most important benefit. The 5 to 10 year group did not even rank time off available in the top five most important traits. The 5 to 10 year group and the 15 to 20 year group ranked wages as the fifth most important trait, while the 20 plus year group ranked wages as being second most important. It is interesting to note that the 10 to 15 year group did not list wages as being one of the top five organizational traits that they desired.

Table 7 indicates that roughly 87% of the new hire group is comprised of employees who have been with their agency for less than five years. This subgroup should be representative of the attitudes of individuals who an agency wishes to recruit. Due to the large percentage of the respondents being from this demographic subgroup, it is not surprising that their top five organizational traits mirror the new hire group as a whole. The subgroup of new hires that has been employed with their current department for 5 to 10 years identified specialized training as the single most important organizational trait.

Departments need to develop the organizational traits that were identified as desirable by the subgroup of employees with 1 to 5 years of experience. Retention of employees in this demographic is identified as the biggest retention challenge to administrators, as the average length of employment with an agency was 34 months before deciding to leave the agency (Yearwood, 2004). Building an agency around organizational traits desired by this subgroup could save the department money and time that is lost when an employee leaves the agency.

Table 8

Breakdown of survey respondents based on years in law enforcement

Years in law enforcement	New Hires	Trainers
No Response	2	2
1 Year to 5 Years	28	1
5 Years to 10 Years	12	6
10 Years to 15 Years	4	12
15 Years to 20 Years	0	12
20 Years or More	0	15

The trainer subgroups based on number of years in law enforcement all identified health benefits now as being one of the top two benefits. The trainers with 5 to 15 years of law enforcement experience listed specialized training as one of the top two benefits, while the trainers with 15 plus years of experience did not even list specialized training in the top five of the organizational traits that were most important to them.

The new hire subgroups based on number of years in law enforcement all listed support of personal needs in the top five organizational traits. Equipment/duty gear was ranked as the second most important by the 5 to 10 year and 15 to 20 year subgroups, but the 5 to 10 year group did not even have equipment/duty gear listed in their top five. Specialized assignments and specialized training became more important to the respondents as the years in law enforcement increased. As the years in law enforcement increased, the desirability of department leadership also increased.

Table 8 reveals a marked difference between the new hires and the department trainers in regards to years in law enforcement. The new hire group is comprised of less than 9% of officers who have been in law enforcement for more than 10 years, while the department trainer group consists of 81% of officers who have more than 10 years of experience.

Table 9

Breakdown of survey respondents based on gender

Gender	New Hires	Trainers
No Response	2	4
Male	43	39
Female	1	5

Both the male and female trainers identified health benefits as the most important organizational trait, and department leadership as the second most important. The female respondents also had health benefits on retirement and work schedule tied for second with department leadership. The fact that both male and female officers rank health benefits during and after employment so high indicates that this organizational trait is universally appealing as a recruiting and retention tool.

Table 9 reveals that 98% of the new hire respondents who identified their gender were male. Due to this overwhelming disparity in the sample, it is impossible to draw any distinctions or conclusions among these subgroups based on gender. The responses of the male subgroup will reflect the attitudes of the group as a whole, while the lone female response will not be indicative of attitudes statewide.

Table 10

Breakdown of survey respondents based on age

Age	New Hires	Trainers
No Response	2	2
18 years old to 26 years old	20	0
26 years old to 34 years old	20	6
34 Years Old to 42 Years Old	3	16
42 Years Old to 50 Years Old	1	14
50 Plus Years Old	0	10

Table 10 indicates that 87% of respondents from the new hires are between 18 and 34 years old, while 83% of the trainers are between 34 years old or older. Each of the age groups of trainers other than the 34 to 42 year old group identified health benefits as the most important organizational trait. The 34 to 42 year old group identified specialized training as being most important, with health benefits and department leadership ranking second according to the Likert scale rankings.

All of the subgroups of new hires based on age listed health benefits as the most important benefit. This was the only demographic category in which the subgroups were in consensus on which organizational trait they chose as most important. The second most important trait was not as obvious. The 18 to 26 year old subgroup identified equipment/duty gear as the second most important, the 26 to 34 year old subgroup chose specialized training, and the 34 to 42 year old subgroup chose health benefits on retirement and support of personal needs.

Table 11

Breakdown of survey respondents based on number of agencies worked for

Number of agencies worked for	New Hires	Trainers
No response	2	2
1 agency	13	15
2 agencies	17	19
3 agencies	9	9
4 agencies	3	2
5 or more agencies	2	1

Based on the number of agencies worked for, the trainer subgroups all listed health benefits in the top two most important traits. The respondents who had worked for two agencies listed department leadership as being most important, with health benefits ranking second. Health benefits on retirement was listed third by the majority of the respondents, although the respondents who worked for only one agency did not even list health benefits on retirement in the top five organizational traits. Respondents who had worked for two agencies listed equipment/duty gear as the fourth most important benefit, while the remainder of the respondents did not list this in the top five.

The new hire subgroups based on the number of agencies worked for was made up primarily of officers who had worked for three or less departments. Health benefits were important to all of the subgroups, as was department leadership. Officers who worked for three or more agencies listed specialized training and promotional opportunities as being of greater importance than officers who had worked for one or two

agencies. The officers who had worked at one or two agencies identified equipment/duty gear as being the second most important trait, while this was not even listed in the top five by the subgroup of officers who had worked for three or more agencies.

Table 11 provides interesting insight into the breakdown by number of agencies where the respondents have worked. The percentage of new hires and department trainers is almost identical in each demographic category. The new hire group that has worked for 4 or 5 departments is slightly larger than the department trainer group. This may indicate an emerging willingness to change agencies in order to find an organization that possesses more of the organizational traits that they desire.

Table 12

Breakdown of survey respondents' department size by protective service employees

Department size	New Hires	Trainers
No Response	2	2
1 to 25 protective service employees	12	10
25 to 50 protective service employees	17	18
50 to 75 protective service employees	4	7
75 to 100 protective service employees	5	6
100 plus protective service employees	6	5

All of the respondents from departments comprised of 75 or fewer protective employees identified department leadership as the most important organizational trait. The group of trainers from departments with 25 or fewer employees differed from the larger departments, in that they identified equipment and duty gear along with department

leadership as the most important traits. It is interesting to note that the respondents from organizations with 100 or more protective employees identified specialized training as the second most important trait, while training was not even in the top five of two of the other groups, and ranked third and fifth with the two remaining groups. The desire for specialized training linked to department size is supported in the literature. Lack of training opportunities was found to be the number one reason that officers defected from smaller police departments (Warrell, 2000).

Among all but one of the trainer subgroups according to department size, wages was ranked as the fifth most important trait. Only the group with 25 or fewer protective employees ranked wages higher, putting it in the number four spot. Warrell (2000) found that low wages were the second most popular reason that officers left smaller departments. It is interesting to note that in Table 3 and Table 6 the department trainers and new hires both ranked wages as the most important trait when they had to select which of the traits they felt was most important. However, in the subgroups represented in Table 12, wages were not ranked any higher than the number four spot.

The new hire subgroups based on department size all listed current health benefits and department leadership in the top five organizational traits. The subgroup of officers from smaller departments listed equipment/duty gear as being the second or third most important trait, but as the department size increased, the importance of equipment/duty gear decreased. The respondents from agencies of fewer than 25 officers did not list support of personal needs in the top five organizational traits, while all of the other subgroups listed this in the top five. The data showed that the larger the agency, the more desirable the support of personal needs became.

It should be remembered that the literature review revealed a substantial difference in retention of employees between larger police agencies versus smaller police agencies. With an average attrition rate of 18.2 percent for smaller agencies compared to 10.2 percent reported by larger agencies, it is incumbent on smaller agencies to focus efforts on developing organizational traits that entice officers to remain with the agency. (Yearwood, 2004).

Table 13

Breakdown of survey respondents based on education level

Educational level	New Hires	Trainers
No Response	2	3
High School	1	11
Associates Degree	35	20
Bachelors Degree	8	13
Masters Degree	0	1
Doctoral Degree	0	0

The trainers by subgroup all had current health benefits ranked in the top two most desirable benefits, and all of the subgroups had department leadership listed in the top three. Unlike the other respondents, the trainers with a high school level education did not list health benefits on retirement in the top five organizational traits. The high school education level subgroup had wages listed as the third most important trait, while the other subgroups did not even list wages in the top five of the organizational traits that

they desire. The high school level respondents were the only subgroup that listed geographical location in the top five.

Table 13 revealed that 76% of the new hire respondents had an associate's degree level of education, with 17% possessing a bachelor's degree. The subgroup with a high school level of education identified wages as one of the most important benefits, the associate's degree subgroup listed wages in the number eight spot, and the bachelor degree subgroup had wages listed in a tie for the third spot. All of the subgroups listed health benefits as either first or second most important. The bachelor degree subgroup of new hires identified health insurance on retirement as the single most important benefit. Based on the high percentage of new hires having an associate's degree level of education, recruitment efforts should be directed to technical colleges, and designed around the organizational traits that officers with this level of education desire.

Chapter V: Discussion

The purpose of this study was to identify some of the key traits that attract highly qualified candidates to apply for employment with an agency, as well as traits which allow an agency to retain these candidates.

This chapter will provide an overview of the study as well as some of the limitations encountered, conclusions reached, and recommendations for future research.

Limitations

This study was focused on all 72 sheriff's departments within Wisconsin. Each jurisdiction and department deals with a variety of factors in running the daily operations of the organization. Due to the large number of sworn officers in Wisconsin, it would be unreasonable to attempt to study the attitudes of all of these officers. For this reason, the study was limited to sheriff's departments, and does not include attitudes of officers from other types of law enforcement agencies within Wisconsin.

Another limitation of the study is that the survey instrument developed did not offer open-ended questions as an option for response. This may have prevented the respondents from providing insight into factors that had not been considered by the researcher or the focus group members.

One limitation that was identified after analyzing the data was the lack of female respondents who filled out the survey. Law enforcement is still a profession made up primarily of male officers. Due to this fact the number of the most recently hired officers surveyed turned out to be disproportionately male. This did not provide a large enough population of female respondents in order to obtain valid data based on this demographic. Although a larger number of the trainer group that responded were female, this was still a

small number of respondents, making the data relatively inconclusive. Bowman (2006) experienced similar difficulty in his study. Of the 46 respondents in his study, 43 were male, two were female, and one person did not respond to the question that identified gender. This fact lends credibility that the current research is representative of the low percentage of women in law enforcement careers.

Conclusions

This research has clearly indicated that the most important organizational traits for recruiting new hires to an agency, as well as retaining current employees within an agency are very similar. Within their respective groups both the trainers and the new hires identified health benefits as the most important item to them in their current position. This could be the emergence of a new trend of prioritization of benefits. The literature review identified wages, geographic location of agency, and training opportunities as organizational traits that were found to be beneficial in recruiting and retaining employees. With the steadily increasing cost of health insurance both during employment, and during retirement, it makes sense that law enforcement officers as well as other professions are realizing the importance of this valuable benefit. Agencies throughout Wisconsin are being faced with difficult budget decisions. Much of this difficulty can be directly linked to the rising cost of health care. The results of this study make it clear that officers are looking at the health care benefits at the agencies that they desire to work for, as well as the agencies that they are currently working for. Progressive law enforcement agencies that wish to attract and retain the best employees need to make exceptional health care plans part of the benefits that they offer their prospective and current employees.

Law Enforcement officers in Wisconsin have the option of retiring at age 53 and being able to draw benefits from the state pension plan. Certain officers can retire at age 50, but they would receive a reduced portion of their pension upon retirement. A serious dilemma facing these officers is being able to provide health care coverage for themselves and their families until they are eligible for Medicare. The results of this research indicate that this is a main priority to both those officers entering into the law enforcement profession, as well as those officers who have been working in law enforcement for a number of years. Based on the desirability of this benefit, employers would be able to use health care benefits upon retirement as a recruiting and retention tool.

Department leadership was ranked as the second most important organizational trait to both groups. This supports the literature in which it was found that sound management practices tend to reduce the rate at which employees desire to work somewhere else (Price, 2007). Most agencies realize the importance of hiring and training the entry-level employees within their organization. Through this research, it is obvious that promotion to leadership positions and continuous training of the department leaders are imperative when creating a desirable work environment that attracts and retains quality employees. The most important variables a managing sheriff can control include communication of genuine interest, realistic promotion opportunities and the full use of employee skills (Price 2007).

The literature review revealed that one significant reason that officers are leaving agencies is tied directly to the lack of support that they feel they receive, and the working relationship that they have with their immediate supervisor (Cooper & Ingram 2004).

When the respondents were asked individually to rank which organizational traits were most important to them, the majority of the respondents from both groups identified the amount of wages received as the number one benefit. This is again supported in the literature in which one study found that the number one reason that officers left an agency was based on budget restrictions (Yearwood, 2004). Other organizational traits affected by budget include equipment and specialized training. Both of these traits were identified in the current research as being one of the top six most desirable benefits to both the new hires and the department trainers. Warrell (2000) found that lack of training opportunities was found to be the number one reason that officers left smaller police departments, with low wages running a close second.

Recommendations

Further research regarding each of the individual demographic measures as well as the individual organizational traits could be done with the data that was collected through this study. Each of the demographic measures could be compared to the separate organizational traits in order to determine which traits the different sub groups of the population found to be the most desirable. The data collected also lends itself to further study regarding the attitudes towards certain organizational traits when an officer first started working for an agency versus how that officer felt about that trait when they were surveyed. Some of the respondents had 20 or more years of law enforcement experience, which might result in a change in attitudes towards the traits that were most important to them. Other respondents were employed with their agency for a short period of time, and they had already experienced a shift from what was a priority to them when they were first hired.

Another fascinating topic that could be studied in more depth would be the attitudes of officers working in primarily urban settings versus the attitudes of officers working in rural settings. The data collected in this study could also be used to compare regional attitudes based on geographical location within Wisconsin. This research presented basic information based on the number of sworn officers within an agency. Typically the departments that provide services to a predominantly urban population would be made up of a larger number of sworn officers. Based on other geographical considerations, this might not always be the case. Additional research could be based on specific geographical factors including urban versus rural population.

Based on the low number of female applicants that took part in this study, this research could be repeated using females as the sole group to be surveyed. In order to promote agencies that appeal to female applicants, it would be important to identify which organizational traits are most attractive to female officers.

The data presented in this study provides a guideline for agencies that wish to develop organizational traits to recruit and retain qualified candidates. The survey results broken down into various demographic categories will enable agencies to identify which types of applicants they wish to recruit, and develop organizational traits that appeal to these specific groups.

The data from this study can be used in conjunction with information received from other studies to build stronger departments. Research data identifying which demographics produce the best officers can be linked with the data from this study to attract individuals from the most desirable demographics.

It is obvious from this research that there is a general consensus among the groups of officers surveyed as to what they feel to be the most important organizational traits. Each individual law enforcement agency will be faced with difficult budget decisions, and will need to prioritize which benefits need to be given preference. It is hoped that the information provided through this study enables law enforcement administrators to make more educated decisions in regards to the traits that identify their agency. Prospective employees and current employees are always looking at what the different agencies have to offer, and the best applicants and employees are going to be drawn to the agencies that possess the best organizational traits.

The research recognized the lowest ranked organizational traits as; facilities, take home squads and educational incentives. It is important to note that this was evident not only between the trainer and new hire groups, but also within the different demographical subgroups of the two main groups.

It is evident throughout the research that agencies must provide high quality benefits and working conditions in order to recruit and retain quality employees who will continue strong departmental traditions and leadership. It is a simple formula. If you want to attract and retain the best and brightest employees, you need to provide the benefits that are attractive to them. If you hire and retain the best and brightest employees, the agency and the community that it serves will be well served for many years. If you fail to build an organization based on the traits that the highest qualified employee desires, the agency and the community will suffer. To sum it up in the words of Dr. Ed Biggerstaff, "hire right, or manage hard (Personal communication, June 16, 2007)."

In regards to the bigger picture, department leaders can make educated decisions that have a great influence on society. The advent of digital video that can be streamed immediately throughout the world has created a society in which law enforcement officers are scrutinized for every move that they make. Our agencies at the micro level, our communities at the macro level, and our society at the mega level can be judged on the actions of one officer or a group of officers whose actions are captured on video. An organization built on the outstanding organizational traits will be reflected in that agencies ability to recruit and retain employees, which will build a stronger department at the micro level. A stronger department at the micro level will lead to providing greater services to the community in which the officers serve at the macro level. A result of a stronger community will proliferate throughout adjoining communities, and help to build a stronger society at the mega level.

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Appendix A

Survey Instrument

This research has been approved by the UW-Stout IRB as required by the Code of Federal Regulations Title 45 Part 46.

RECRUITMENT/RETENTION SURVEY INSTRUMENT

Please circle the most accurate response

Please indicate how important the following factors were to you ***"At First Hire,"*** *and also how important they are to you* ***"Now."***
Rate your responses using the following scale;

	1 Not Important	2 Mildly Important	3 Moderately Important	4 Important	5 Very Important

A.) Amount of wages

At First Hire	1	2	3	4	5
Now	1	2	3	4	5

B.) Type of health insurance benefits available while employed

At First Hire	1	2	3	4	5
Now	1	2	3	4	5

C.) Health insurance benefits provided after retirement

At First Hire	1	2	3	4	5
Now	1	2	3	4	5

D.) Geographical location of agency

At First Hire	1	2	3	4	5
Now	1	2	3	4	5

E.) Age and condition of department buildings and facilities

At First Hire	1	2	3	4	5
Now	1	2	3	4	5

F.) Availability and condition of equipment such as squads and duty gear

At First Hire	1	2	3	4	5
Now	1	2	3	4	5

G.) Ability to work specialized assignments such as SWAT, Recreational Safety, K9, School Resource, etc.

At First Hire	1	2	3	4	5
Now	1	2	3	4	5

H.) Potential for promotion or advancement

At First Hire	1	2	3	4	5
Now	1	2	3	4	5

I.) Educational incentives available for pursuit of an advanced degree

At First Hire	1	2	3	4	5
Now	1	2	3	4	5

J.) Educational opportunities available for specialized training

At First Hire	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**
Now	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**

K.) Work schedule

At First Hire	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**
Now	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**

L.) Amount of time off available

At First Hire	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**
Now	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**

M.) Effectiveness of department leaders/management

At First Hire	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**
Now	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**

N.) Departments support of balance between personal and work needs

At First Hire	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**
Now	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**

O.) Availability of a take home squad

At First Hire	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**
Now	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**

P.) Which of the factors listed above in A-O would be most important to you when selecting a department to work at?_____(Write the letter here)

---

1. Number of years with your current department

1-5	**5-10**	**10-15**	**15-20**	**20+**

2. Number of years in Law Enforcement

1-5	**5-10**	**10-15**	**15-20**	**20+**

3. Sex: **Male** **Female**

4. Age: **18-26** **26-34** **34-42** **42-50** **50+**

5. Number of law enforcement agencies you have been employed with

1	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5 or more**

6. Your current departments size by number of Protective Personnel

1-25	**25-50**	**50-75**	**75-100**	**100+**

7. Highest Level of Education Completed

High School	**Associate Degree**	**Bachelor Degree**	**Masters Degree**	**Doctoral Degree**

Appendix B

Survey Request Letter

SHERIFF'S DEPARTMENT
ONEIDA COUNTY

Jeffrey J. Hoffman
Sheriff

John M. Sweeney
Chief Deputy

2000 Winnebago St.
Rhinelander, Wisconsin 54501
Telephone (715) 361-5100
Fax (715) 361-5112
www.oneidasheriff.org

July 11, 2007

Dear Sheriff,

I am excited to sponsor a research project that is being conducted by a member of my department. Lt. Phil Schmidt is doing a statewide research project to identify how organizational traits affect the ability to recruit and retain the most sought after law enforcement applicants. This research is going to involve distribution of a survey instrument to all of the sheriff's departments throughout Wisconsin. The target population is going to be limited to sheriff's departments, and this project should provide all of us with valuable information regarding which organizational traits draw applicants to our agencies, and what keeps these individuals employed with us.

I am asking that you assist with the research project by giving the survey packet labeled **Most Recently Hired Officer Copy** of the survey instrument to the most recently hired patrol deputy within your department, and the packet labeled **Training Officer Copy** to the lead field training officer, or department training officer. Please have the individual who completes each survey use the enclosed self- addressed stamped envelopes to return the completed survey.

If you wish to receive a copy of the finished research paper, please fill out your name and address on the enclosed post card, and return the post card with the completed surveys. It is anticipated that this project will be completed by May 1, 2007. In order to meet this completion date, I would ask that you have the survey completed and returned no later than April 1, 2007.

Thanks in advance for your assistance with this project. I anticipate that the information gathered through this research will be of benefit to all of our agencies

Sincerely,

Jeffrey J. Hoffman
Sheriff

Appendix C

Informed Consent Form

Consent to Participate In UW-Stout Approved Research

Title:

THE EFFECT OF AGENCY TRAITS ON THE ABILITY TO RECRUIT AND RETAIN APPLICANTS FOR DEPUTY SHERIFF POSITIONS IN WISCONSIN

Investigator:

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Description:

The main objective of this research is to identify which organizational traits and employee benefits are desired by the most sought after candidates for deputy sheriff positions. It is anticipated that data collected in this project will assist agencies in identifying which employee benefits and organizational traits applicants find most appealing and desirable. By identifying these benefits and traits, agencies will be able to match the applicants that they desire with the benefits and traits that will draw them to the agency.

Risks and Benefits:

A potential risk associated with this research would include the subject responses being different than views of the administration of the department with which they are currently employed. The information gathered deals with positive organizational traits, and the subject's attitudes towards these traits. There is no risk of personal injury due to the fact that substantial physical activity is not required by the subjects in completing the survey. The subjects can fill out the survey at their convenience and in a setting that is comfortable for them. There will be no personal identifiers associated with this survey, which eliminates concerns of invasion of privacy.

The benefits of this project to the subjects and society include the ability to assist law enforcement agencies in identifying organizational traits that will attract high performing individuals to seek employment, and remain employed with the agency. By attracting and retaining the "best and brightest," we help to build stronger law enforcement agencies and communities, and as a result make each individual safer within their community.