High Technology Investigation at the University of Central Florida

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cones approximately one foot off of the ground. The third obstacle was a wooden ramp he made with the help of members of the maintenance staff. These were realistic but challenging obstacles. Safety was a major concern. We decided that anyone who competed would be required to wear a helmet, elbow pads, knee pads, and wrist guards. Students were advised that no one would be allowed to compete without these items. Most borrowed the equipment from the person racing in front of them.

We distributed flyers to every student and put up posters around campus advertising the event. We picked the race date carefully to ensure it did not conflict with other major activities. The date we decided on was between fall and winter sports seasons so as to not compete with them. The race date came and it rained. It stopped raining a couple of hours before the race but the pavement was definitely wet. My technical advisors (student racers) told me that rollerblading on wet pavement is out of the question, so we cancelled the race and rescheduled it for the next week. Anyone who has been to northern Illinois in late October knows that weather is extremely unpredictable at this time of the year. The make up date came and it snowed, so once again we had to reschedule. We chose a date in late November. This date came and we were determined to get it in. The sun was out, the pavement was dry, and all else was good except it was about 30 degrees and windy. We decided to proceed with the competition anyway.
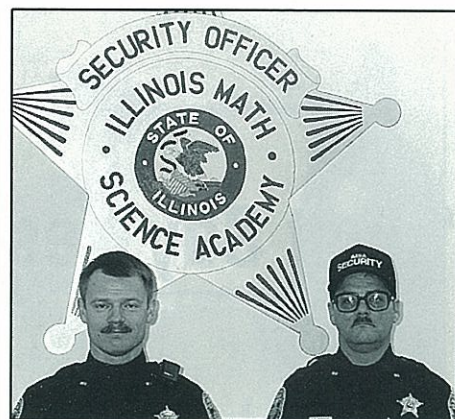
The turnout was good, the racers were enthusiastic, the competition came off exceptionally, and the best part was no one got hurt.

The comments I received from the students who participated, the staff members who were spectators, and the staff who assisted was extremely positive. The entire operation was organized extremely well by my staff and other than the weather it came off without a hitch.

I had several goals for this activity. One goal was to establish a new sport or competition that was not available on campus. Another goal was to open or develop existing lines of communication with students and staff. We also hoped to develop good will between the Security Department and students/ staff as well as develop a new crime prevention delivery method. Most of all we hoped to start the process of reversing the time-honored, written in stone security principal of just saying "No, You Can't Do That."

About the Author

Jim has been the Chief of Security at the Illinois Mathematics and Science Academy since it opened in 1986. Prior to that he was the Chief of Campus Police at Waubonsee Community College in Sugar Grove, IL. and a Deputy Sheriff for the Kendall County Sheriff's Department. Jim is the President of the Illinois Campus Law Enforcement Administrators, and a member of the Executive Board of the Illinois Association of Chiefs of Police. Jim is an Infantry Officer with the present rank of Major in the Illinois Army National Guard. Jim possesses a Bachelor of Science degree from Northern Illinois University. Jim is presently the chairman of the IACLEA Campus Protection Officer Training Program.
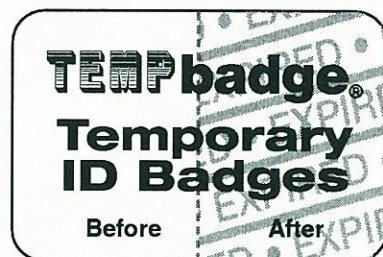

Joe Manherz and Dale Arentsen conceived and coordinated the blade run.

Walking Along the Cutting Edge ...and Sometimes Falling Off

Steve Ramirez, Director of Campus Safety and Security, Palm Beach Atlantic College

In October 1994, Palm Beach Atlantic College created its first in-house Department of Campus Safety and Security. The Department's inaugural year was for the greatest part an experience in teamwork and synergistic creativity. However, there have been occasions when the adventures that ensued were of a caliber that would cause Indiana Jones to shudder in his fedora. Overall, it has been a whole lot more of "It's a Wonderful Life," than it has been "Temple of Doom."

Recently, a colleague from the "for profit" business world asked, "What was the single most difficult task encountered in the effort to create a 'cutting edge' organization from scratch?" The answer came quickly. The most difficult task without a doubt has been the creating and maintaining of a progressive, forward thinking, learning culture that is free of the attitude of entitlement.

If you read the various articles published in many professional journals and take them at face value, you are left with the impression that every author is the perfect leader and every project a great success. As law enforcement administrators, we must strive constantly to lead from the front. This means that we must be innovators. As innovators we must remember that often more can be learned from the complexity of hardship than from the simplicity of easy success.

We can progress as a profession only if we are collectively willing to accept the risk of experimentation and creativ-

> *An "earning environment," as first defined by Judith Bardwick in Danger in the Comfort Zone, is one in which, "people are energized by challenge; they know their work will be judged and that rewards will be based on accomplishment."*

ity. Then when true learning has occurred, we must each have the courage to report honestly what we have learned, and exactly how we learned it. What follows is such an honest reporting of what has been learned during Palm Beach Atlantic College's ongoing effort to create a learning culture in its Department of Campus Safety and Security.

Trying to Walk on the Edge

The term "cutting edge" is a rather nondescript, politically safe, catch-all phrase that without definition signifies nothing.

At Palm Beach Atlantic College, the definition we embrace includes the establishment and maintaining of a corporate culture which promotes a "learning" and "earning" environment.

The first concept to define here is that of a "learning environment." In his landmark book *The Fifth Discipline,* Peter Senge defines the "learning organization" as one in which innovation, experimentation and systems thinking are encouraged and supported. In a learning environment, mistakes of good intent are rewarded, not punished, as long as learning has occurred.

An "earning environment," as first defined by Judith Bardwick in *Danger in the Comfort Zone,* is one in which "people are energized by challenge; they know their work will be judged and that rewards will be based on accomplishment." To promote this kind of environment within an organization, certain support systems must be in place.

The support systems in place at PBA include a mission statement, goals, and values which support the learning/earning culture. The mission statement refers to the need for each Department member to seek actively to identify community problems, and to improve the quality of life in this community. Our values include:

- We constantly strive to learn and grow as individuals, professionals, and as an organization.

- We believe that we can progress as a professional organization via learning which is accomplished through systems thinking and innovative experimentation.

- We believe that each member of our organization should add value to Palm Beach Atlantic, and that rewards are directly related to performance and constructive creativity.

Along with written support systems such as mission and value statements, it is important that the organization's leadership echoes verbally and by action their support for an open, learning/earning culture. Organization members must feel free to use their creativity and areas of greatest strength in an effort to constantly add value to the work being done. As Dr. Bardwick points out, they must feel challenged to be constantly learning and striving to fulfill their potential. They must feel empowered and that their ideas are respected. They need to know that they are given the authority to make decisions and to be innovative. All members of the organization should believe that the work they do is significant and makes an impact on the community they serve. This community after all is our customer and in very real terms we are a business that delivers a service.

Other support systems that aid in the creation of the learning/earning culture include the breaking down of internal barriers between organization members. Line supervisors are not bosses. They are leaders, coaches, teachers, and sometimes advocates. Manuals should

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be simple and promote a teamwork, spirited, progressive culture. Like the New Testament, they must focus not on the "can't do's," but rather on the "can do's" of life in the organization.

With all this creative energy, it could be concluded instantly that nothing could go wrong and that the PBA Department of Safety and Security is the perfect organization, full of energized, creative, members who take ownership in their work. Of course if anyone did come to this conclusion it would be about as big a judgment error as volunteering for the kamikaze academy. This organization consists of, and is lead by, regular people. There has been only one perfect person in history and although he is on our side, he's not on our staff.

Falling Off the Edge

The greatest force within an organization, which has the power to push it off "the edge," may well be the condition of entitlement. This is a dynamic destructive force that can invade any organization. Most managers know it when they see it, but only recently has it been accurately defined. Judith Bardwick defined entitlement as a condition in which people are "complacent; they get raises, bonuses, and

benefits pretty much as a matter of course, so there is no incentive to work hard."

During the hiring the original cast of employees for the Department's inaugural year, one of the qualities sought was that of diversity. It would seem to make sense that people from diverse backgrounds would have a myriad of experiences and talents to bring to the department. What was not anticipated was that each of these new organizational members also brought with them both the positive and negative cultural norms that they had collected throughout their personal history. Some of these new employees came from a long history of membership in stagnant, hierarchical bureaucracies.

The true focus of good leadership may have been best stated long ago by Lao Tsu:

- The wicked leader is he who the people despise.

- The good leader is he who the people revere.

- The great leader is he who the people say, "We did it ourselves."

While this is certainly true, it is also true that you can not lead people toward a vision that all their past experiences cause them to resist. The stagnant, negative culture they bring with them can go a long way toward crushing the spirits of those department members who do buy into the organization's vision. Employees who feel they are owed a job, raises, bonuses, and other perks just for putting in time at work are in a condition of entitlement. Entitlement destroys creativity and progress. How then can we turn around the effects of years of negative experience? Once we are faced with the culture of entitlement, how do we turn it into the learning/earning culture we desire?

Climbing Up, and Walking Again

The first step taken at PBA to deal with the problem of the entitlement attitude brought into the organization was the establishment of the aforementioned

support systems and leadership-based affirmation. This was then supplemented with evaluation, feedback, and coaching given to the individual employees. In most cases, by involving the entire organization in the establishment of this new learning/earning culture, people became empowered to learn and grow as individuals and as a team. There were however, some individuals who were so burdened by the "baggage" of their past professional history that they refused to accept the change process.

These few entitled employees who did not buy into our corporate vision even after intensive coaching, guiding, training and feedback had several traits in common. In every case, they were the members with the most professional history. These were the people with ten to twenty years experience in large, hierachical law enforcement bureaucracies. They often would cling desperately to the "comfort zone" of their past experiences and culture. These employees often used terms such as:

- "Back at (the bureaucracy's name) we did it this way."

- "We always did it this way at other places I've worked."

- "Where is the rule or procedure that says I should do that?"

- "The way I see it, I'm owed that raise because I've been here a year and have seniority."
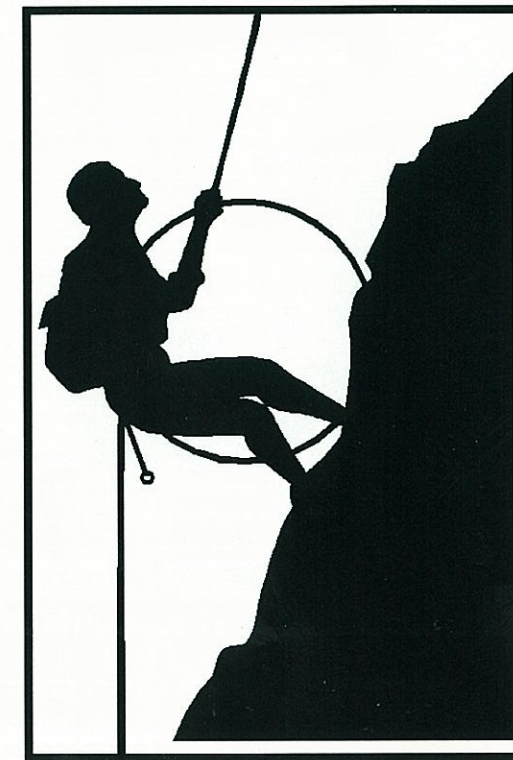
The answer to these statements at PBA would be:

- "This is not like any other place you've worked. Here you have the opportunity to be better than that."

- "We are not owed anything, we earn it!"

What should organizational leaders do if, even. after the leadership has provided training, coaching, and support for cultural change, there exists an organizational member or members who refuse or are simply

> *Team members respect other members' opinions and talents, even during disagreements on issues. Families consist of groups of people thrust together by fate.*

unable to make a "fit" with the organizational culture? If the leader has clearly defined the expected cultural and performance standards, and communicated this definition clearly to the employee without any evidence of improvement over a predetermined "trial correction" period, it may be time to separate the employee from the organization. The focus here is after all to build a team, not a family. Team members don't let other team members down. Team mem-

bers respect other members' opinions and talents, even during disagreements on issues. Families consist of groups of people thrust together by fate. Families forgive the freeloaders and carry the dead weight because "they're family." Here at PBA, we want a team, not a family. If the organization's leadership cannot summon the courage to either empower deeply entitled employees to resign or to simply fire them, this organization will never be a team.

The Perilous Journey Continues

Over the past year, the Department of Safety and Security at Palm Beach Atlantic College has passed through every passageway on the road to developing a learning/earning culture. Three members have been separated from the team, while others have received promotion, increased autonomy, raises, time off, and other perks related to their outstanding performance and use of creativity. The department did not give them anything; they earned it and can enjoy the personal satisfaction that comes with earned rewards.

This process of culture building will never end or become any easier with time. This is just fine with our team because each member understands that nothing worthwhile is easy. As part of a learning/earning organization, we know that each hardship is another opportunity to be creative, each setback is a chance for growth.

About the Author

Steve Ramirez is the Director of Campus Safety and Security at Palm Beach Atlantic college. Prior to his appointment at PBA, he held the position of commander at a South Florida municipal police department. He has over fifteen years of combined civilian and military law enforcement experience, including five years in the United States Marine Corps, Diplomatic Security Battalion. He holds a B.S. degree and is receiving a M.S. degree in April 1996, from Palm Beach Atlantic College.