

By Ed Oakley and Doug Krug

Quality: The Human Factor

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Written By Sherry Keene-Osborn

Quality Breeds Efficiency and High Morale at State Patrol

When you see a Colorado State Patrol car's lights flashing in your rear-view mirror probably the last thing you think about is...Quality.

But the Quality program that's in place at the Colorado State Patrol, designed by Enlightened Leadership International, Inc., a Denver firm, is extremely successful by any standard of measurement. The program was designed and implemented at the Patrol by Ed Oakley and Doug Krug, Enlightened Leadership International partners and authors of a new book *Enlightened Leadership: Getting to the Heart of Change* (Simon & Schuster, New York, August, 1993).

Within the Patrol itself, the enthusiasm for the program is infectious. Outside, the results measurements are clear: a decrease in fatal traffic accidents and in DUI's, and increase in academy training grades and employee morale—and all without more manpower to meet a significantly increased workload.

Major Don Lamb is an Officer in Charge of the Staff Services Branch and Director of the Colorado Law Enforcement Training Academy who runs the program. He's been with the Patrol more than 23 years.

"At this point you're supposed to be cynical, anxious to retire," Lamb says. Instead, he's taken on a second full-time job, running the academy in addition to staff services.

The quality program has been in place since 1989. "We implemented positive self imaging and approach our work from a positive point of view instead of a negative one," Lamb says.

The Patrol prepared a survey to give all employees statewide and asked what their needs were. There were 75 questions in various categories, and survey results were analyzed "to see what members thought," Lamb says.

"We built our training program around the results in the survey," he says. It's paid for completely by money from the criminal interdiction program, primarily the sale of property acquired through drug arrests. Initially, the cost was \$27,000 and this year it's \$50,000, but no taxpayer money is involved.

"We started with the Staff Services Branch, the largest communication center in the state. It had averaged four to eight complaints a week. After the program was brought in, it averages one a month," Lamb says. "And sick leave has dropped 21 percent."

After this program had worked, a three-person instructor team went on the road and talked to all management teams, including staff support. "It was critical to bring them in," Lamb says. "Before, unless you wore a uniform you weren't taken seriously."

Program components included building a positive self image. "Before, most people had focused on the negatives in their life," Lamb says. "It's a neat turnaround to watch this work and get feedback about how it's helped in their

personal lives." Also important was focusing on what was going right in their work, and building on that in areas that weren't as strong, he adds.

A decision was also made to apply it to the most recent recruit class, although people told him it couldn't be done. "Everyone passed everything", Lamb says. "Normally on the mid-term we have an 82 percent passing rate, and this class was 95 percent. Over-all skills of this class averaged 85 percent and its normally 78 percent. Normally we have a 10 percent loss of recruits, but this class only had 5 percent."

Lamb emphasized that this is tough management, not a Pollyanna approach." A number of people decided to take retirement rather than deal with the program.

Next, the program was applied to on-the-road teams. "We focus on results, not quotas. There's been a reduction in accidents and a safer and more efficient traffic flow. The closest thing to a quota is how many people you help—these guys would drive off the side of a bridge to help somebody," Lamb says.

The program was fully operational last May and it's been universally accepted, he says. "It was a tough time to give it. We'd been rationed on gas and you could only patrol a certain amount of time. The potential to be down was defiantly there.

"We gave our people the ability to be in on management decisions," Lamb explains. "They express opinions—when data comes in showing a road is dangerous, we ask the troopers what we can do."

As an experiment, Lamb says they tried stopping the program in one troop for six months and "that troop went seriously downhill."

When there's a district staff meeting, they start by "focusing on what's going right, what was your greatest success. Then you can take it back and apply it to the whole organization. There's a warmth, a friendship between various teams on the state patrol now that's been enhanced—it's really neat to see that," Lamb says.

So successful has the program been, that other people are coming to the Colorado State Patrol and studying it. "We're in the process of writing results in a management manual and it will be a lot of interest across the U.S.," Lamb predicts. "The Colorado State Patrol's management program has become the model program for state patrols across the country.

"People who have the idea that you can give a TQM program one time in a seminar and that will fix everything are wrong. You have to continuously implement it, change and monitor it, give it to your new people coming in" Lamb says. The patrol is now considering giving the program to spouses and families because employees have asked them to.

Of extreme importance to the success of the program was the support given at the top, Lamb emphasizes. "Many people are burned by TQM programs that say this will be great, and three weeks down the road it's the same old game," Lamb believes. "This program is unique because it starts with self, not company. It gives people and opportunity to grow in their personal lives.

"Territorialism has ceased to exist here," Lamb says. "last week another captain and I were doing creative brainstorming to solve a problem he had. That would never have happened before.

"There used to be a rift between headquarters and the field," Lamb adds. "The solution to that was to constantly rotate management every two years, so no one gets too territorial about a certain area.

"It's got a tough side – if people continually keep focusing on the negatives, they're gone. It has a built-in job performance measurement. It has such a positive support from people that if someone doesn't want to implement it, the pressure from his own team will cause him to do so," Lamb says.

For emergency situations, the program has what's essentially a crisis management process. "One team had such a big rift between management and middle management that a top officer flew in and went into a 'time out.' We call it a 'bent and broken' drill," Lamb says.

Essentially, anyone can say anything without fear, and "skip level" management is used – bringing a top officer in and excluding the middle manager. "We can go in and do a 'bent and broke' any time," Lamb says. After the top officer finds the problem, he goes back to middle management and negotiates the answers.

Another feature is a survey that compares every management team in a number of areas. "If we find one that's not as strong in an area, we go to one that is strong there and find out what they do and implement it," Lamb explained. The word "problem" is never used.

Not only have fatalities and DUI's fallen, but "kudos" letters have increased. "The vehicle miles traveled have grown 35 percent and the number of licensed drivers in the state has gone up. But we've gone down in the number of troopers. Yet staff is managing at a better level," Lamb says.

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"We've taken everything that's been written on the philosophy of management and put them into a real life program," Lamb says. The Quality programs that are the most successful are the ones that "provide for the growth of each individual," he believes.

"Our Academy staff has gone from feeling like second class citizens to some of the finest we have in the world. We'd the only law enforcement agency in the U.S. that has all of its officers up to a technical level two. We have totally computerized accident reconstruction and we provide the best service for our citizens," Lamb says.

"That's what our guys take pride in – how they feel about themselves." And that, Lamb is convinced, leads to Quality.