



A Message From the President of the Central Florida Chapter

John Park

Surfing For Answers!

I love surfing ... in more ways than one. Whenever I go surfing (usually in much better surfing places than Florida), I think about how awesome it is to harness the power of the ocean and ride a wave as far and as fast as it will take me.

With the advent of the Internet (allegedly fathered by **Al Gore**, according to him), we all have a way to harness the power of the World Wide Web and ride this wave of knowledge by "surfing the web" for information on any subject from A to Z.

As I thought about the crucial issues affecting the majority of the agencies Central Florida PBA represents, I realized that it all came down to one main problem ... low morale! The three main symptoms of low morale are "poor pay, lagging benefits and declining work conditions." The end result is a "current crisis in recruiting and retention of public safety servants," whether they are firefighters, corrections or law enforcement officers!

I thought about what more I could possibly do to help resolve this major problem plaguing our law enforcement community. So... I went surfing!

As I surfed the web (aka Googled) for "how to boost morale," I discovered 3,890,000 website hits! It's been a long journey surfing through many of these hits, but I found the main ways to boost morale starts with YOU doing your part and not relying solely on others to make things right! YOU must be willing to stand for everything that is right or you will fall for (or from) anything that is wrong! As a dues paying PBA member, use our services to help yourself and others!

Let's identify the fact that healthy morale is vital in any organization. Stress among employees and colleagues hurts morale and therefore potentially hurts productivity. Boosting morale all goes back to enhancing salaries, benefits and work conditions.

I like acronyms, so here is a simple way for employers to boost morale by using the very word M-O-R-A-L-E itself! Remember, YOU need to be involved in this process more than simply complaining ... YOU must start campaigning for what is right!

M – MONEY! Let's face it, nothing else matters more to the majority of us because this is what provides the basics in life. Bottom line, employers need to cut the fat and put any extra money into improving salaries. Everyone (including law enforcement and community leaders) should remember that their public safety servants should be paid like their lives depend on their service ... because it does, especially in the Central Florida (Orlando) area that leads the nation (per capita) in murders! By the way, Central Florida is also #1 in tourism and #2 in convention business, but we are not even close to those numbers in pay!

O – OPPORTUNITY! Everyone (not just chosen ones) should be given the opportunity to enhance their career path while dedicating themselves as a valuable asset to their agency! This means Training, Promotions, Transfers, Assignments, etc. should be distributed fairly and impartially. Potential great leaders could be stymied by unfairness and that

not only hurts the employee but the employer as well.

R – RESPECT! The "Golden Rule" (treat others as you want to be treated) should be adhered to by all, no matter the rank or time in service. Understandably, there are times when discipline is necessary, but it should be given for "behavior modification purposes only." Employers should remove any tools that help facilitate personal or politically motivated or gainful practices while providing resources (training, checks and balance systems, accountability measures, etc) to deter unfairness. Likewise, employees should take ownership of their wrongdoing and make every effort to modify their behavior whether or not they are fairly disciplined.

A – ACCESS! Weekly meetings, open-door policies and regular visits with employees help quell the rumors that are often damaging to morale. This also helps with the other "A" that is so necessary, ACCOUNTABILITY!

L – LEADERSHIP! It is simple—lead not just by any example but lead by the right example. If we are so blind to follow the blind (usually blinded by their own egomania or scandal), then we will all end up in the ditch! Good leaders usually beget even greater leaders!

E – ENVISION! People (and their morale) die because of a lack of vision. Employers should provide a clear direction for the agency that not only reflects on learning from mistakes of the past, but provides hope and real promise for the future!

I also think these small side things help, but they don't address the real hardcore issues!

Group lunches with agency leaders, including the actual Chief or Sheriff. It doesn't have to be fancy or expensive. BBQ or pizza parties can be morale boosters.

Humor boards to post cartoons, jokes, humorous photos, etc. We will try to put some non-controversial and funny articles or cartoons in the PBA bulletin boards.

Off-site meetings. Schedule a department meeting away from your office. If it's a nice day, hold a meeting outside. Maybe even follow it up with a picnic in the park.

Special days like "take your child or spouse to work day," "relaxed dress day" or "create your own unique day." Maybe you could award joke prizes for winners.

Talent shows. Encourage others to show off their other talents outside the workplace. Prizes may stimulate participation.

Snapshots. A picture says a thousand words, so bring a camera to work and take candid shots of employees. Post the photos (maybe of the talent show) around designated areas of the office or the PBA bulletin boards.

Be cheerful, no matter what! Please be sure to smile and say hello to your co-workers.

Stay in perspective. Remind yourself and your colleagues that things aren't as bad as they sometimes seem during the stress of the moment.

I hope this article helps all of you realize that we can and we will get through these trying times ... together!

Please stay safe and be blessed! ●

The Top Ten Signs You Have Crappy Health Care Insurance:

1. When you walked in the ER holding your own severed arm, they gave you two Tylenol and sent you home.
2. You're only covered for medical procedures involving the top half of the human body.
3. The guy at the HMO's customer service desk is wearing body armor.
4. You saw Dr. Sherman in the walk-in clinic for exactly two minutes because you had chest pains. He said it was nothing to worry about and your co-payment was \$2,500.
5. You called for an appointment with your primary care physician and the lady said the first available opening was October of 2009.
6. You are a municipal police officer.
7. Your HMO shares an office with a rental car/check-cashing outfit.
8. Ten dollars per aspirin.
9. You called with a question about your coverage and they tried to get you to refinance your home.
10. Surgeries are handled at the local funeral home to cut transportation costs.

Meth Puts Strain On ERs

According to a recent news report, methamphetamine accounts for more emergency room visits than any other drug. That finding was part of the summary of a survey conducted by the National Association of Counties.

In the survey of 200 county hospitals in 39 states and Washington, D.C., 47 percent of the respondents said methamphetamine is the top illicit drug involved in emergency room visits.

"This is a national problem," association spokesman **Tom Goodman** told **Donna Leinwand**, a reporter with USA Today. "The costs of methamphetamine are placing a great strain on county governments."

Of the hospitals surveyed, 73 percent said emergency room cases involving meth have increased over the past five years, and 56 percent said hospital costs have risen because of the treatment of meth patients.

Nearly 12 million people in the USA have used meth at least once in their lives, according to responses to the 2004 National Survey on Drug Use and Health conducted by the Department of Health and Human Services.

Another survey found that 69 percent of state and county treatment program directors reported an increased number of people seeking treatment for meth use.

Corrections officials are dealing with the increase in meth use as well. Across the board, prison officials report huge increases in the costs of medical and dental care for inmates who have long histories of meth use.

One exceptionally costly impact of using the drug is on the teeth, which turn virtually black and fall out after continuous use of the drug.

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