



National Association of Field Training Officers Indiana Chapter

Field Training Officer Errors

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As FTO's we all want to be a success. However, statistics show the odds can be against us. At a recent FTO school, twenty-seven different errors which affect the performance of a FTO were discussed. At this time, I will discuss just three. You will have to keep tuned in to learn or recall what the remaining twenty-four are.

Speed / Time Factor

First, is the speed/time factor. As humans, FTO's have a particular method of training new recruits. Our motivation, incentive and thoroughness contribute to the speed/time factor. Each segment or phase of the training requires different fundamentals of instruction, some of which may involve constant attention while others are easily digested by the recruit. The recruit always accepts this instruction under some degree of stress. Couple this stress with the stress of the job and the results can be a critical error for the FTO. As a suggestion, FTO's should review any problems which can be the result of speed/time factors and critique himself/herself first before passing judgment on the performance of the recruit.

Burnout Factor

Second is the burnout factor. We have all suffered from this dilemma. It does not have to occur during a training phase. Job burnout affects us all sometime during our career. Burnout for FTO's can be accelerated by many factors. External factors may be outside schooling, family (sleepless nights due to newborns), and finances - just to name a few. Internal factors might result from other FTO's being overly critical instead of being supportive, or other responsibilities in addition to being a FTO. Many times FTO's take on numerous responsibilities much the same as people approach a buffet style meal. We historically take on more than can be digested. A suggestion for burnout is to be honest with ourselves and, if and when burnout occurs, don't be afraid to ask for help.

Poor Communication Skills

Last, is poor communication skills (verbal/written). As FTO's we must constantly review and improve our communication skills. This is not only important as a FTO but in all phases of police work. In order to pass on information to a recruit, a FTO should insure that what you meant is what was understood. A break in communications between a

recruit and a FTO or vice versa will ultimately lead to an unsatisfactory phase for the recruit and possibly an unfair appraisal of the new officer. If a recruit has less than acceptable communication skills, we have guidelines for correction. If a FTO has the same problem, the results could be disastrous.

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