



National Association of Field Training Officers Indiana Chapter

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“My way or the highway” is the wrong way.

Consistency is one of the most discussed topics in an FTO evaluation. Many students fresh from the field training program complain that the field training officers lacked consistency and sometimes instructed the same topic in a contradictory manner.

“My Way or the Highway” has long been a problem within field training programs. New officers move from one FTO to the next and find that the methods they had been taught to accomplish a task are now considered unacceptable. These unacceptable ratings result in poor evaluations on the daily observation report. The best way to combat this problem is to have detailed standards written for use in grading the student officer. This, however, doesn't always solve the problem.

Even though departments invest effort into providing complete standard evaluation guidelines, sometimes FTO's refuse to follow those guidelines. FTO's will grade the new officer based on their own personal standard instead of using the departmental standards. This is often difficult for managers to detect and without a program review and evaluation may not be caught for sometime.

Trainers need to understand that there are a number of possible ways to complete a task and that often one officer will not use the same method as another. Just because the methods differ it does not mean that one is wrong. The FTO must remember that the recruit does not have to accomplish a task in the same manner as the FTO. As long as the recruit is not wrong or unsafe and the result is acceptable, then their DOR should reflect the acceptable rating.

Inconsistency in evaluating the new officer only hinders their ability to learn. Avoid making a serious evaluation error by grading new officer based on your own personal standards instead of the department's standard evaluation guidelines. Avoid the error of “My Way or the Highway” and give the recruit the opportunity to be different and still be right.

-Steven Kellams