

**SOUTH COAST BRITISH COLUMBIA TRANSPORTATION AUTHORITY POLICE  
ENGAGEMENT AND RETENTION**

**By**

**SHANE ARNOLD BARBER**

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**We accept this thesis as conforming**

**to the required standard**

.....  
**Police Project Sponsor  
Chief Officer Ward Clapham,  
South Coast British Columbia Transportation Authority**

.....  
**Terry Anderson, PhD, Faculty Project Supervisor**

.....  
**Anne Schultz, PhD, Committee Chair**

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ABSTRACT

This study examines how leadership practices within the South Coast British Columbia Transportation Authority Police Services (TPS) might foster employee engagement and retention. It is expected the TPS may experience turnover rates, outside of the norm, in comparison to other municipal police departments in BC. There is a sense of urgency within this organization fuelled by the impending mass retirements of the Baby Boomer generation coupled with a significant number of job opportunities available to experienced police officers in most other police departments. Through action research, employees identified five key findings related to employee engagement within the TPS: 1) the importance of challenging work; 2) the importance of growth and development opportunities; 3) the importance of clearly defined goals and objectives; 4) the importance of a collaborative work environment; and 5) the importance of relationship skills. Recommendations were developed that addressed these findings.

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## CHAPTER ONE: FOCUS AND FRAMING

### Introduction

The policing community in general is suffering a recruiting crisis due to the large number of recent and impending retirements of the Baby Boomer generation. According to Izzo and Withers (2007), “Baby boomers’ impending retirement officially starts in 2011, but given the likelihood that they will retire early, the skilled-labour gap will begin building to a crisis starting in 2008” (p. 4). In British Columbia, all twelve municipal police departments, as well as the South Coast British Columbia Transportation Authority Police Service (TPS), formerly the Greater Vancouver Transportation Authority Police, are actively recruiting. Police forces are facing a buyer’s market for potential new recruits. In the police force, experienced hires requiring no additional training prior to employment are known as exempt candidates. The demand for exempt candidates is higher now than ever before due to the short turn-around time from hiring to deployment.

My research will be conducted in collaboration with the TPS, which is one of thirteen police departments in British Columbia. The remaining jurisdictions are policed by the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) which holds the provincial policing contract in British Columbia. The TPS was established in 2005 with a current authorized strength of 154 police officers and 47.5 civilian staff positions (Greater Vancouver Transportation Authority Police Service [GVTPS], n.d., ¶ 1). The TPS delivers policing services to the multiple modes of the transit system including SkyTrain, West Coast Express, the SeaBus, and buses. As the TPS is a supplementary police agency, the jurisdictional police agency retains primary responsibility for policing in each jurisdiction.

The TPS is currently at full strength and has successfully recruited new members to meet the needs of the department in 2008. The TPS will expand to 171 sworn members and 66 civilian staff in 2009. This will be an increase of 17 sworn members and 13.5 civilian staff positions. The TPS anticipate hiring five sworn members per year over the next ten years to accommodate the expansion of police services required to meet the needs of a growing transit system. Furthermore, the TPS will require an additional 36 sworn members, beyond the above stated numbers, to service the new Evergreen Line (B. Nielson, personal communication, November 3, 2008).

Unfortunately, due to the need for exempt members at other police departments resulting from impending retirements, the TPS will be competing with all other police services for the best new recruits and exempt members in order to fill the seats in their growing organization. In addition to their growth, the TPS will be facing their own turnover issues with the impending retirement of many senior members as well as the potential loss of junior members to other police departments. While in charge of the Recruiting and Training section of the West Vancouver Police Department, I developed a keen interest in the issue of retention. My own department faced many struggles retaining junior members. There is an excellent opportunity, through valid research, for the TPS to address the issue of retention by developing a clear picture of what their members value about themselves and their organization.

My major project will focus on the issues of engagement and retention within the TPS. My research question was: How do existing leadership practices and how might new leadership practices foster employee engagement and retention? The sub-questions include:

1. What current organizational factors promote employee engagement and retention?
2. What current organizational factors reduce employee engagement and retention?

### The Opportunity and its Significance

In the TPS, the average service level of constables in the patrol division is 17.5 years. This high level of service at the constable rank is representative of the large number of exempt members who have retired from other police departments and were subsequently hired by the TPS. Currently, the TPS has the luxury of drawing on the experience of many senior and highly experienced officers. The ability to draw on that experience is critical in that there are 52 members within the TPS with less than three years service (B. Huston, personal communication, October 27, 2008). Knowledge transfer will be a critical issue for the TPS. When speaking of transferring knowledge, Izzo and Withers (2007) stated, "You need to dig in and find out the demographics landscape for your particular organization. Find out how many of each age group you have and what are your projected retirement lines" (p. 272).

As a natural process of time, this young organization's mid-seniority range will grow in numbers, providing a pool of talent that can be drawn on to take over supervisory and senior leadership roles. Unfortunately, a challenge the TPS may face is that members who are intent on leaving a police service for employment with another police service generally do so after they have gained three to five years of experience. As the TPS is a young police agency that became fully operational on December 4, 2005 (GVTPS, 2007a, p. 1), many of their members are fast approaching that service level. Furthermore,

many senior members who transferred from or retired from other police departments and joined the TPS are fast approaching retirement age. As in any organization, there is a need within the TPS to retain and develop their junior members in order to bolster the mid-range service levels, thereby providing continuity of knowledge and experience. The TPS needs to recruit, train, and retain a sufficient number of these people in order to develop a stable pool of mid-service employees.

A great deal of resources are expended in training new recruits. As part of their initial education at the Justice Institute of British Columbia (Justice Institute), recruits are required to complete a four-month field training component of the program. This experiential learning component of training is a critical juncture in a new recruit's development. Recruits are exposed to the realities of the job and introduced to the culture of the organization. There are a variety of competencies assessed and reported on. However, police departments should be aware that these new recruits are also assessing the organization in terms of the degree of fit with their needs and values. They have already started to develop, or not develop, a level of commitment to the organization. The assigned field trainer, responsible for the four-month component of the Justice Institute program, needs to be an experienced and competent police officer who sees beyond the recruit's basic training needs and recognizes the value of building commitment at this stage. A second chance at first impressions is very hard to come by. According to Izzo and Withers (2007), the cost of losing an employee can more than double the cost of the salary of that employee (p. 11).

Creating further pressure on the TPS to retain long-term members is the need for police departments to have designated experts in such areas as use of force, firearms,

drugs, and so forth. This employee development is usually a long process requiring a great deal of training and practical experience. When a designated expert leaves a police service, there is a significant loss of knowledge capital, creating a void that is difficult to fill. According to Izzo and Withers (2007), "If organizations are to remain fruitful and sustainable then the critical issue of knowledge retention must be addressed and for some, more quickly than others, if not then it will look more like a knowledge collapse" (p. 271).

In mid-2008, Ward Clapham was appointed the Chief Officer of the TPS. Chief Clapham brought with him a great deal of experience as the former Superintendent and officer in charge of the Richmond RCMP from 2001 to 2008. Chief Clapham left the RCMP after 28 years of service, which included small town to large city policing. He came with diverse experiences ranging from undercover work to commander of the South Vancouver Island Emergency Response Team. He has received numerous awards for his policing and community service and was a contributing author for Dr. Terry Anderson's (2006) book, *Every Officer is a Leader*. With the appointment of Chief Clapham, a fresh look has been taken at the way business is currently done in the TPS. Retention has been targeted as an issue of concern by Chief Clapham.

An opportunity exists for TPS employees to clearly define what leadership practices have the greatest impact on their engagement levels and subsequently their commitment to the organization. Further, once defined through valid research, there is the political will within the department to act on recommendations that will support the retention and engagement of their employees.

The benefits of this research are not only pragmatic, but there is also a learning and development opportunity for myself and all of the participants involved in the research. Due to the nature of the research question, I will focus on many subject areas in order to clearly define the issue. The research process will lead into core topics such as culture, leadership, and values, both organizational and personal. Recognition of shared values as they relate to each other and the organization provides people with a common language. "Shared values make an enormous difference to organizational and personal vitality. A ground breaking study reveals that firms with a strong corporate culture based on a foundation of shared values outperform other firms by a huge margin" (Kouzes & Posner, 2002, p. 80). Further, the opportunity exists to develop leadership skills within the research participants as they collectively identify those leadership capacities that might have a direct impact on engagement. The value of collaboration, engagement, and visioning an ideal future was a common theme. The participants witnessed firsthand the value of action research.

This project also provided a significant opportunity in terms of further developing my administrative and project management skills. The scope of this project went beyond the typical duties and functions I have performed within my organization. I also had the opportunity to learn, in collaboration with the research participants, the tremendous impact various leadership capacities have on engaging employees. I developed more clarity of my own values as they relate to leadership and organizational life. As Kouzes and Posner (2002) aptly stated,

Learning to lead is about discovering what you care about and value. About what inspires you. About what challenges you. About what encourages you. When you

discover these things about yourself, you'll know what it takes to lead those qualities out of others. (p.385)

Given that police departments and RCMP detachments across British Columbia are all struggling to recruit new members, an experienced member has become a valuable commodity. When a police department hires a member with significant experience, it has benefitted greatly in this economy. In the long-term, the service and experience gap between junior and senior members may continue in the TPS. The gap affects succession planning for supervisory and executive positions as well as planning within specialty sections. In the short term, the department may become somewhat of a training department, where officers receive the basics and move on to a different, but not necessarily better, police agency. Ongoing turnover is an expensive proposition, resulting in the loss of knowledge capital and an additional training burden for the department.

If the research is conducted and viable solutions are implemented, there may well be tangible positive effects on this organization's capacity to attract, engage, and retain members. Training resources could be directed towards skill sets beyond basic competencies. "In a highly competitive and turbulent environment, continuous learning and innovation are essential for the survival and prosperity of an organization" (Yukl, 2006, p. 239). Long-term human resource planning and development would become more viable. Officers would have a better sense of direction in terms of their future.

Stakeholders, such as the criminal justice system overall, other police agencies, and the community in general, would have the benefit of a wider spread and depth of experience within the TPS. Long-term members may likely have a greater sense of the community and are generally more engaged and connected with that community.



In early 2007, the first Strategic Plan was implemented for this young police service, covering a five-year period from 2007-2011 (GVTPS, 2007a). Chief Clapham is ultimately responsible for its successful implementation. The plan has five key strategic objectives that will support the significant infrastructure and organizational building required in a relatively new police service. The plan identifies people to be one of the five key strategic objectives. The strategic plan specifically addresses employee engagement and retention issues.

I have had a discussion with Chief Clapham and he supports this research as it will enable the TPS members to develop a collaborative understanding of leadership competencies that foster engagement. Supervisors have a direct and palatable impact on employee retention. Kouzes and Posner (2002) stated, "A key factor in why people stay in an organization is their managers. It's equally important in why people leave organizations. People, in fact, don't generally quit companies, they quit managers" (p. 283). A clearer picture of these topics will help develop, in a collaborative fashion, recommendations that will address specific goals within the TPS (GVTPS, 2007a) strategic plan. I had no doubt, if presented with solid research, Chief Clapham would support recommendations that add value to the current way of doing business at TPS.

#### Systems Analysis of the Opportunity

Wheatley (2006) stated, "The new science keeps reminding us that in this participative universe, nothing living lives alone. Everything comes into form because of relationship" (p. 145). The TPS is a system working in relationship with external systems. Retention is an issue that is affected by systems both internal and external to the organization. Police departments are organizations that are affected by external systems

at the local, provincial, and federal levels. Local police boards, provincial oversight agencies, and federal courts are three examples of decision-making bodies that can impact the operations of the TPS. Without becoming overly simplistic, I will narrow the scope of this complex system to those systems and relationships that may have the greatest and most direct impact on retention issues.

Systems within the TPS that may have an impact on this project are similar to those in any police service. They include but are not limited to the following:

- (a) corporate governance; (b) police board; (c) the executive members of the organization—the decision makers; (d) union—collective agreement; (e) different sections within the department—competing needs and supportive needs; and (f) budget constraints or freedoms.

It is important to note that the above mentioned players in and of themselves are neither supportive nor resistive in relation to employee engagement or retention. They simply have their own individual, and sometimes competing needs. For example, the Police Board may generally support any initiatives that improve employee engagement within the TPS. However, those initiatives must fall within the TPS (GVTPS, 2007a) mandate. Initiatives that provide a more challenging work environment will be partially dictated by the Police Board's own agenda and must relate to the TPS mandate.

Externally, the twelve municipal police departments, the TPS, and the RCMP collectively are a system. The current trend in policing is integration with other departments in order to form specialty sections. These units share resources in a collaborative effort to solve issues that transcend boundaries. The TPS participates in integrated units that are related to the mandate of the organization. The TPS also

participate in Joint Force Operations in support of projects that relate to the transit system. This provides a great deal of developmental opportunities for TPS members. However, there is a resulting negative impact as well. Every time a member is attached to an integrated unit, they are exposed to new opportunities that can quite easily become permanent if they so choose. This trend is expected to continue as integration is supported by the solicitor general and the police services division of the provincial government.

The TPS also interacts with organizations that are integral to their operations. The TPS conducts the majority of its training and development at the Justice Institute. A new recruit must complete basic training at the Justice Institute in order to meet provincial standards and begin employment with a municipal police department. Further, the Justice Institute conducts advanced training that certifies police officers for investigative and court purposes. The Justice Institute is in essence a hub for the police agencies in British Columbia as a community of practice. Officers from every municipal police department teach and train at this institute. I anticipate utilizing this central hub in order to gather the best practices of the entire policing community. I anticipate that there will be a symbiotic relationship with the Justice Institute, as they may find value in employee engagement and retention research and offer the findings to the policing community as a whole.

On a larger scale and having a significant impact on TPS engagement and retention is demographics. The police sector in British Columbia expects increased demands on manpower due to the projected retirement of the large number of police officers hired in the mid 1970s. Current retirement trends in larger departments such as the Vancouver City Police, which intends to recruit up to 60 members a year over the

next five years (C. Duggan, personal communication, February #, 2009) and the RCMP are looking to hire 2,000 members a year for the next few years (RCMP, 2009, ¶ 1), which will create job opportunities for TPS members that never existed before. It is my observation that these opportunities are common knowledge in the police community and there is a prevailing mindset that experienced police members are a valuable commodity. This mindset may be felt as a resistant force throughout the research project.

### Organizational Context

The TPS was established in December 4, 2005 having transitioned from a transit security department to a designated, armed police service (GVTPS, 2007a). The organization started with 117 employees, 93 sworn officers, and 24 civilian staff. The growth, in terms of staff and infrastructure since that time, has been rapid. As stated earlier, the TPS will expand to 171 sworn members and 66 civilian staff in 2009. Along with the growth in personnel, there is an aggressive strategic plan (GVTPS, 2007a) underway to further develop the department as a professional police service. In mid-2008, Chief Clapham was appointed the chief officer and thereby became ultimately responsible for accomplishing the goals and objectives of this newly formed organization.

The mandate of the TPS (GVTPS, 2007b) is to preserve and maintain the public peace, prevent crime and offences against the law, aid in the administration of justice, and enforce the laws in force in British Columbia, primarily directed towards:

- a. any criminal activity or breach of public peace that could affect the safety or security of transit passengers, employees or property, and

b. conducting investigation and enforcement operations with respect to any unlawful activity on or around transit vehicles and other transit property.<sup>1</sup>

Currently, the majority of transit police officer deployment relates to investigation and enforcement operations of unlawful activity on or around the SkyTrain system. There is a total of 49.5 km of above ground track with more under development. The SkyTrain travels through Vancouver, New Westminster, Burnaby, Surrey, and in the near future will include Richmond. There are currently 33 stations that serve approximately 220,000 daily passengers (GVTPS, 2009).

The TPS had 43,429 reported incidents in 2007, of which 28,000 were cleared by the issuance of a provincial violation ticket (GVTPS, 2007b, p. 11). The high number of incidents cleared by a charge is representative of TPS members enforcing offences related to non-payment of fares as well as other minor offences. However, the TPS also made 2,364 arrests, 666 of which were persons with outstanding warrants and the remainder were related to offences within their jurisdiction (p. 11). It is important to note that that these statistics do not capture the tremendous amount of effort dedicated to problem-oriented policing, intelligence gathering, participation in community events, and special event policing, for example, the Celebration of Lights. The TPS also provided 1,211 assists to other police agencies, illustrating their cooperative working relationship and efforts towards seamless policing in the Transportation Service Region (p. 11).

In order to facilitate the significant infrastructure and organizational development required to provide the above-noted service, the TPS embarked on a five-year strategic

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<sup>1</sup> 2007 *Report to the Community*. (p. 5), by Greater Vancouver Transportation Authority Police Service, 2007, Vancouver, BC: Author. Copyright 2007 by Greater Vancouver Transportation Authority Police Service. Reprinted with permission.

plan for the years 2007–2011 (GVTPS, 2007a). Of particular importance to this project is the inclusion of people as a category of strategic priority. Within this priority, there are six goals with their own related objectives. These goals are recruitment and retention, performance, staff development, roles and responsibilities, labour relations, and health, safety and wellness (pp. 16–24). These goals seem to speak directly to drivers of employee engagement and retention.

There will be significant change on the horizon for the TPS as it works through developing and implementing the specific goals associated to the Strategic Plan (GVTPS, 2007a). Although momentum can build as change is implemented, I have to be cognizant that too much change can become wearing on members of an organization, particularly if that change is too rapid. This research could be construed as the precursor for more change.

Chief Clapham is my project sponsor and will offer guidance and support as the research unfolds. Chief Clapham has a vested interest in the successful outcome of this project. In addition to his passion, he possesses the authority to commit resources, time, and opportunity to conduct the research and implement the recommendations that may follow from the data.

Of major benefit to me is the fact that Chief Clapham is new to this organization. He does not come with the preconceived notions or potential biases often found in long-term employees. Coghlan and Brannick (2005) stated, “You may assume too much and so not probe as much as if you were an outsider or ignorant of the situation. You may think you know the answer and not expose your current thinking to alternative reframing” (p. 62). Having a relatively unbiased sponsor to discuss the project with allowed me to

widen my perspective, avoid climbing the ladder of inference, and keep my own potential biases in check.

## CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

### Introduction

This section presents a review of the literature related to the value of engaging employees and the linked affects on retention. Other related topics such as values, generational differences, and leadership as it relates to employee engagement will be reviewed.

### Employee Engagement Defined

The reality is that an organization's human resources have become the dominant competitive lever for business today. With talent scarcity projected to continue well into the future, it is critical that employers understand what it takes to attract, retain, and engage the people needed for success (Hewitt Associates, 2007, ¶ 1). It is no longer a cliché to state that your employees are your greatest asset. There is a new sense of urgency in this statement fuelled by the impending mass retirement of the Baby Boomer generation. According to Statistics Canada (as cited in Martel, Caron-Malenfant, Vézina, & Bélange, 2007), "A low birthrate and aging population presents many challenges for Canada. One of the most significant and pressing challenges involves the labour force.... Boomers are reaching retirement age and are beginning to leave the workforce in large numbers" (¶ 1).

So how do companies retain their greatest asset? Frank (2004) stated, "Employee retention and employee engagement are joined at the hip, and represent two major HR challenges as we move further into the 21st Century.... given unprecedented shortages and erosion of loyalty, how do we keep them engaged?" (p. 11). When speaking of retaining today's highly skilled workers, Izzo and Withers (2007) stated, "Those that also



manage to 'engage' the hearts and souls of their workforce will come out at the head of the pack" (p. 3). Blessing White (2008), a global human resource company, provided some compelling statistics that support the notion that retention and engagement are an interrelated issue stating, "There is a clear correlation between engagement and retention, with 85% of engaged employees indicating that they plan to stay with their employer through 2008" (p. 1). Given that employee engagement plays a significant role in retaining talent, it is crucial for leaders to understand what employee engagement means, the level of engagement in their organization, and finally, what drives that engagement.

Interestingly, in light of the fact that employee engagement has been identified as a key factor in most organizational performance and retention issues, there is no single encompassing definition of the term. Thatcher (2007) stated, "Engaged employees have long been hailed as the holy grail when it comes to unlocking discretionary effort and boosting performance and productivity, a lack of clarity and consistency around what we really mean when we talk about engagement persists" (p. 1). Dewhurst and Fitzpatrick (2007) agreed with this, stating, "The trouble with employee engagement is that while everyone's talking about it, they all seem to mean different things. In fact some people use it when they're not sure what it means at all" (p. 1).

Loehr and Schwartz (2003) provided a multi-faceted definition of engagement: "Full engagement requires drawing on four separate but related sources of energy: physical, emotional, mental, and spiritual" (p. 9). They contended that all four sources profoundly influence the others, and each requires skilful management that balances energy expenditure with energy renewal. This description captures the multiple dimensions that make up the whole person. Anderson (2006) touched on each of these

dimensions when describing the twelve skills critical to personal mastery. Of note, both authors underscored the need to, and how to, build capacity in each dimension to prepare for inevitable difficulties.

“We define ‘spiritual’ not in the religious sense, but rather in more simple and elemental terms: the connection to a deeply held set of values and to a purpose beyond our self-interest” (Loehr & Schwartz, 2003, p. 110). They went on to describe the spiritual dimension as the most powerful source of motivation, perseverance, and direction. This description of the spiritual dimension is similar to what Goleman (1998) described when he connected emotion to work stating: “Emotions are, literally, what moves us to pursue our goals; they fuel our motivations, and our motives in turn drive our perceptions and shape our actions. Great work starts with great feeling” (p. 106). Heger (2007) has narrowed the definition to something that I would consider an overarching description of engagement. He stated, “Engaged employees are intellectually stimulated and emotionally inspired. They have the tools needed to perform their jobs, are advocates of their organizations, have a desire to stay with their employers, and willingly go the extra mile” (¶ 7).

Regardless of the wording or definition, it is clear there are multiple facets that require an employer’s attention if they intend to fully engage and thereby retain their employees. Leaders who know the connection between emotion and work understand the need to inspire their constituents. According to Kouzes and Posner (2002), “Inspiring leadership speaks to our need to have meaning and purpose in our lives” (p. 31). Purpose is central to becoming fully engaged in our work and lives. Loehr and Schwartz (2003) stated,

The most compelling source of purpose is spiritual, the energy derived from connecting to deeply held values and a purpose beyond one's self-interest. Purpose creates a destination. It drives full engagement.... We become fully engaged only when we deeply care. (p. 131)

Although I believe the spiritual dimension is the primary ingredient in engaging employees, without engaging the minds of people, full employee engagement is impossible. It is not enough for people to be emotionally committed to their work; they need the support from their organization to accomplish their tasks. They need to understand the role they play in their organizations and how that role relates to organizational objectives. Blanchard (2007) provided a bowling analogy when describing roles and organizational objectives: "When people approach the [bowling] alley, and they notice there are no pins at the end; they don't know what their goals are. How long would you want to bowl without pins?" (p. 152). Carrying on with Blanchard's analogy, employees also require the organization's support in becoming a competent bowler, by the organization providing the appropriate resources and training.

In defining employee engagement, the value of physical energy cannot be overstated. Physical well-being affects people on every level. With insufficient physical energy, it becomes difficult to accomplish any task regardless of your mental or spiritual engagement. Loehr and Schwartz (2003) stated, "Without sufficient high-octane (energy) fuel, no mission can be accomplished" (p. 9). A person's energy level affects their physical stamina as well as their emotional state. Anderson (2006) stated,

Energy management is the preventative approach to managing stress. If a person can get the jump on stress accumulation in mind and body by nourishing, strengthening, and resting themselves physically, he or she will have a much greater reserve of energy to cope resourcefully with more difficult or demanding situations. (p. 75)

Exercise and a healthy diet provide the energy to fuel positive emotions. Many mental health professionals attribute the growth of depression to a lack of deep friendships and personal time, compounded by a lack of healthy eating and de-stressing techniques such as exercise (Izzo & Withers, 2007, p. 85).

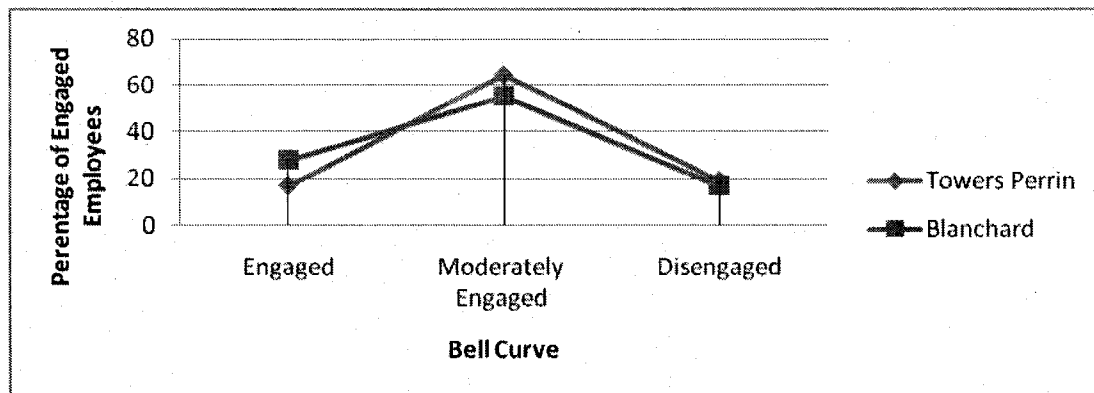
People are no longer an organization's greatest asset. They are the life blood of the organization, providing one of the few remaining competitive edges in a world where technology is developing exponentially. Leaders would be wise pay to pay attention to their followers from a holistic perspective: body, mind, and soul.

#### The Value of Engagement

Gallup surveys involving more than 1.5 million employees, from over 87,000 work units, clearly show that the extent to which people feel powerful and engaged in their work is directly linked to positive business outcomes (Kouzes & Posner, 2002, p. 283). Hewitt Associates annually publishes a list that identifies the best companies in Canada to work for as rated by their employees. Hewitt Associates (2007) have identified key benefits of a highly engaged workforce: lower turnover rates, greater employee productivity, and increased customer satisfaction (p. 1). Clearly, when people bring their hearts and minds to their work, the organization experiences a positive outcome. According to Corace (2007), "Engaged employees are genuinely committed to the organization's success and contagiously passionate about what they are doing. These employees are not just involved; they are committed to the organization, its vision and values" (¶ 3).

Towers Perrin (2003), a global business consulting firm, conducted an employee engagement study in 2003 involving more than 35,000 employees in U.S. companies.

Three distinct groups were identified as being, highly engaged 17%, moderately engaged 64%, and disengaged 19% (p. 21). These percentages held up across a range of demographic segments, from job level to industry category. Blanchard (2007) supported the above data, albeit with different categories, but the same bell curve with 28% engaged, 55% not engaged, and 17% actively disengaged (p. 138). Based on these percentages, there exists a sizable middle contingent who are moderately engaged and require attention (see Figure 1). An organization's time and effort would be well spent on understanding the expectations of their employees and capitalizing on the untapped passion and mind power of this large, middle group of talent.



*Figure 1.* Comparison of employee engagement as revealed through research by Blanchard (2007) and Towers Perrin (2003).

It is also important to note that disengagement does not have a neutral effect on an organization. There are degrees of disengagement. At best, disengaged employees are simply a drain on resources better spent on those with their mind and hearts committed to the mission and vision of the organization. Goleman (1998) addressed the effects of disengagement when he stated, "These people are most prone to using resources of the organization solely for their own benefit. The opportunistic among them see their current position mainly as a step on the way to somewhere else" (p. 121). Blanchard (2007) said

this about the actively disengaged: “These people are negative, unhappy, and dissatisfied. They try to enlist others in their ‘pity party’ and often undermine or sabotage management and others’ efforts” (p. 138). These negative employees have an effect on the massive middle of moderately engaged employees. Blanchard further stated, “Gallup estimates that just the actively disengaged employees cost the American economy between \$292 and \$355 billion a year in lost productivity” (p. 138).

Germane to this research is the value of employee engagement as it relates to turnover. Included in their 2003 study, Towers Perrin categorized people in three groups being highly engaged, moderately engaged, and disengaged based on engagement surveys (p. 16). They compared the level of engagement against the employee’s intent to stay with their current employer and broke the data into three categories (see Table 1).

Table 1. *Percentages of Employees Intent to Stay Based on Engagement Levels*

Category	No plans to leave	Would consider the right opportunity	Actively looking for another job	Have made plans to leave current job	Plan to retire in the next few years
Highly engaged	66%	25%	2%	1%	6%
Moderately engaged	36%	47%	8%	3%	7%
Disengaged	12%	51%	23%	6%	8%

*Note:* Compiled from Towers Perrin (2003, p. 16)

Towers Perrin’s results clearly illustrate the positive correlation between engagement and commitment. Blessing White (2008), another global human resource company stated, “There is a clear correlation between engagement and retention, with 85% of engaged employees indicating that they plan to stay with their employer through 2008” (p. 1).

*Engagement Drivers*

Given that employee engagement brings measurable value to an organization, understanding what drives engagement in an organization should be a primary function of senior leadership. If you want to know what drives engagement in your organization, ask the people who work there and listen to their answers. Gallup (as cited in Thackray, 2001, p. 1) has conducted employee engagement research in a variety of industries through hundreds of focus groups and thousands of interviews. Through their research, twelve key employee expectations were identified. In 2003, Towers Perrin conducted a similar study through surveys of over 35,000 employees across a variety of industries and identified ten top drivers of employee engagement containing similar expectations as those identified in the Gallup study (as cited in Thackray, 2001).

These studies have produced a valuable list of employee expectations. However, the real value is in understanding how these expectations relate to the emotional and rational factors of engagement. For example, in the Towers Perrin (2003) study, they identified 10 employee engagement drivers, which I have grouped into emotional and rational categories (see Table 2).

Some of these statements can take on meaning from both the emotional and rational perspectives: for example, “Senior management communicates clear vision for long-term success”; “Am I emotionally inspired by their message of success”; or “Do I rationally understand the role I play in achieving organizational objectives leading to long-term success?”

Table 2. *Employee Engagement Drivers*

Category	Engagement Driver
Emotional	Senior management has sincere interest in employees well-being
Emotional	Senior management communicates clear vision for long-term success
Emotional	Company provides challenging work
Emotional	Company cares a great deal about customer satisfaction
Emotional	Employees have excellent career opportunities
Emotional	Company has a reputation as a good employer
Rational	Employees have appropriate decision-making authority
Rational	Employees work well in teams
Rational	Employees have resources to perform jobs in a high-quality way
Rational	Employees have appropriate decision-making input

*Note:* Compiled from Towers Perrin (2003, p. 8)

Simply put, people are committed to something that engages them emotionally or rationally. According to Goleman (1998), “Traditional incentives miss the point when it comes to getting people to perform at their absolute best. To reach the top rung, people must love what they do and find pleasure in doing it” (p. 106). Leaders who recognize the value of inspiring people in their organizations tap into the human potential created by passion. Wheatley (2006) supported this notion when she stated, “I have witnessed the incredible levels of energy and passion that can be evoked when leaders or colleagues take time to recall people to the meaning of their work” (p. 132).

Regardless of what researchers have identified as common themes affecting employee engagement, each organization should assess their own employees. The weight



placed on any given engagement driver may vary greatly between organizations. As stated by Bell (2008), “The most reliable data are obtained from the individuals (employees) in the given environment. They provide the best information regarding how work environment factors influence their performance” (p. 35).

### *Values and Engagement*

Understanding what people value about themselves and their work is crucial to fostering high levels of engagement in any organization. According to Izzo and Withers (2007),

Values are the primary source of energy driving behavior. Inwardly, we know our values as beliefs. Outwardly, they are manifested as behaviors and choices. When our values and work drift apart from one another, we experience a commitment crisis. When they're tied into a bundle, we put our hearts and souls into our work. (p. 15)

Values alignment is critical in developing an engaged workforce. Organizations need to understand what their employees value about their work and themselves. The only way to do this is to ask and listen.

Kouzes and Posner (2002) emphasized the relationship between values and commitment in an organization, in stating, “People cannot commit to an organization or a movement that does not fit with their own beliefs. Leaders must pay as much attention to personal values as they do organizational values if they want dedicated constituents” (p. 51). Senge (1990) agreed with this statement and further stated, “A vision not consistent with values that people live by day to day will not only fail to inspire genuine enthusiasm, it will often foster outright cynicism” (p. 207).

Values differ among people based on a variety of factors such as life experience, culture, gender, religion, and generation. For the purpose of this research, I will focus on the generational differences in the workplace.

### Generational Difference

As previously discussed, not all employees share the same values. Generational difference plays a significant role in determining one's values. Knowing what those generational differences mean to an organization in terms of engagement and retention is essential given that four generations are represented in the workforce today. Generations share historical events, culture, fads and life experiences. These collective experiences lead to a common set of values, beliefs, and expectations. Patota, Schwartz, and Schwartz (2007) supported this definition in stating, "A generation is a group of people who share common experiences and a common collective memory based on the events that occurred in their lifetime. The collective memories lead to a set of common beliefs, values and expectations that are unique to that generation" (Generations Overview section, ¶ 2).

While researchers differ slightly in the precise years of birth that define the different generations, most agree that there are four broad generations of employees: Veterans, born between 1925–1944; Baby Boomers, born between 1945–1964; Generation X, born between 1965–1981; and Generation Y, born between 1982–2000 (Hart; Howe et al.; Yu & Miller; as cited in Wong, Gardiner, Lang, & Coulon, 2008). Each generation experienced significant historical events that shaped their values and beliefs. The Boomer generation experienced the civil rights movement, the moon landing, the Vietnam War, the assassination of JFK, and the development of television.

Generation X experienced their share of notable events such as the beginning of the AIDs

epidemic, the Challenger disaster, Three Mile Island, and the first personal computers.

Generation Y was the first generation born into a computer savvy world. They experienced September 11(911) along with the rest of us and attended high school during the Columbine massacre

Importantly, there are no strict borders separating one generation from the next. People are born at the beginning, middle, and end of a generation. Cultural norms and events that play a role in defining the values and beliefs of any group often transcend the boundaries of generations. For example, people born on the cusp of a generation may share common experiences related to a war, a civil rights movement, or an economic depression. There are some events that affect the values and beliefs of people on a global scale. Regardless of culture, race, or religion, every person witnessing the events of 911 and the ensuing rise of global terrorism now has something in common. Understanding generational differences as they relate to workplace motivation is important for leaders. Although every individual comes to the table with a different set of life experiences, there are some generalities that can be drawn from each generation. Based on my readings of Bell (2008), Crampton and Hodge (2007), Glass (2007), and Patota et al., (2007) I have come to understand there are certain common agreements reflected between these various generations. While researchers may differ in the wording when defining what factors are significant in driving/motivating different generations, there is some broad agreement with those identified by Izzo and Withers (2007; see also Table 3).

Table 3. *Common Generational Workplace Motivators*

Generation	Motivation Techniques
Baby Boomers	Want to be change agents Expects recognition for their work and tenure Likes an open door approach Provide opportunities to lead Desires to stay on top of trends
Generation X	Task variety/stimulating work Attach rewards to performance Allow room for creativity & innovation Share all your knowledge not selected pieces Doesn't want to hear "pay your dues" Won't work where can't grow
Generation Y	Task variety/stimulating work Work is their social environment Doesn't want to hear "pay your dues" Give regular performance review with substance Attach rewards to performance Work has to be challenging & interesting

*Note:* Compiled from Izzo & Withers (2007, pp. 247–249)

However, there is a disagreement among some researchers as to what causes these differences. Wong et al., (2008) suggested the primary reason for generational differences is not necessarily those events in history that have impacted the values and beliefs of each generation, but more likely a function of age. For example, as reflected in Table 3, Izzo and Withers (2007) contend that Baby Boomers expect recognition for their work and tenure, whereas Generations X and Y do not want to hear pay your dues. Using age as a defining factor, the reason Generations X and Y do not want to hear pay your dues may

be a function of age and having not paid their dues as their older Baby Boomer cohort has. Wong et al., suggested that it would be interesting to undertake a longitudinal study, researching participants in the same age group as they progress through different stages in their career. Regardless of generational differences being a function of age, shared life experiences, or a combination of both, the fact remains there are differences and commonalities in values, beliefs, and expectations that leaders should pay attention to, which may aid in creating an engaged work force.

### Leadership and Employee Engagement

Searching for a definition of leadership that captures the essence of fostering an engaged workforce lead me to understand why there are so many and varied definitions of leadership. Stoghil (as cited in Yukl, 2006) stated it best: “There are almost as many definitions of leadership as there are persons who have attempted to define the concept” (p. 2). So, perhaps, it is best to ignore the many definitions of leadership and instead focus on providing a clear understanding of those leadership characteristics that best foster an engaged workforce. Overlaying, underpinning, and threaded through any of these characteristics is who the leader is at their very core.

### *Self-Leadership First*

Leaders must first turn inward and understand their own beliefs and core principles. Kouzes and Posner (2002) stated, “When you clarify the principles that will govern your life and the ends that you seek, you give purpose to your daily decisions” (p. 394). This level of personal searching is essential for every leader. Followers need to have confidence in the beliefs of their leaders, and leaders need to know what they believe in and why. Covey (2004) wrote extensively about a values-based approach to

leadership, relying heavily on enduring principles that transcend religion, culture, social philosophies, and ethical systems. He contended that these principles are the very essence of human nature, such as fairness, integrity, honesty, potential, and growth.

Leaders who possess a clear understanding of their values and stand on a foundation of core principles readily communicate this to their followers through voice and deed. As Wheatley (2006) stated,

These ideas speak with simple clarity to issues of effective leadership. They recall us to the power of simple governing principles: guiding visions, sincere values, organizational beliefs - the few self-referential ideas individuals can use to shape their own behavior. The leader's task is first to embody these principles, and then to help the organization become the standard it has declared for itself. This work of leaders cannot be reversed, or either step ignored. In organizations where leaders do not practice what they preach, there are terrible disabling consequences. (p. 130)

Employees will judge their leaders by the alignment of their actions with their stated principles and values. Kouzes and Posner (2002) stated, "People resolutely refuse to follow those who lack confidence in their own beliefs. There is simply no trust in those who can't or won't tell us their values, ethics, and standards" (p. 28).

#### *Characteristics that Foster Engagement*

Kouzes and Posner (2002) administered a questionnaire to over seventy-five thousand people around the globe, asking respondents what they expect from a leader they would willingly follow, not because they have to, but because they want to. They advised the respondents that the key word in the question was willingly. Respondents were given a list of twenty key leadership characteristics and asked to pick their top seven. This study spoke directly to leadership as it relates to engagement. Results were recorded over three different periods spanning fifteen years from 1987 to 2002. Of note, the top four characteristics reported each year were honesty, forward-looking, competent,

and inspiring (p. 25). Kouzes and Posner asserted that these four key characteristics form what communications experts consider “source credibility” (p. 32), when they stated,

Researchers typically evaluate people on three criteria: their perceived trustworthiness, their expertise, and their dynamism.... notice how strikingly similar these characteristics are to the admired qualities of honest, competent, and inspiring—three of the four top items selected in our survey. (p. 32)

Kouzes and Posner found that people who perceive their manager to have high credibility are more likely to:

Be proud to tell others they're part of the organization;...  
Feel a strong senses of team spirit;...  
See their own personal values as consistent with those of the organization;...  
Feel attached and committed to the organization;... [and]  
Have a sense of ownership in the organization. (p. 33)

All of these statements are consistent with employee engagement. In fact, the essences of these statements are also found within the Towers Perrin (2003) study that identified the top ten drivers of engagement.

Regardless of the wording or level of importance, Blanchard (2007), Goleman (1998), Izzo and Withers (2007), Senge (1990), and Towers Perrin (2003) all spoke to the value of leaders being honest, forward-thinking, competent, and inspiring as identified by Kouzes and Posner (2002). However important any of these four characteristics appear to be, a balance is essential. Quinn (2004) developed the “Competing Values Model of Leadership” (p. 88) that emphasizes the importance of a leader possessing a balanced set of characteristics. Quinn contended that any critical leadership characteristic as a stand-alone quality will have a negative value if not balanced by other characteristics. For example, if a leader was profoundly forward looking and not balanced in terms of being competent, honest, and grounded, chances are he will develop a vision that is unrealistic

and deluded. This model reminds us of how important it is to consider the leader as a whole. How often have people been moved into positions of leadership based on stand-alone characteristics of confidence and assertiveness only later to reveal their lack of balance when they show themselves as arrogant and oppressive?

### Summary

A review of the literature has identified a correlation between employee engagement and retention. Central to developing an engaged workforce are the values, beliefs, and expectations of the employees within the organization. The literature revealed the multiple dimensions of a person that directly impact their ability to become engaged in their work. Regardless of the definition or wording, it became clear that without addressing the physical, emotional, mental, and spiritual aspects of an employee, full and sustainable engagement becomes an impossible task. Finally, leaders who have taken the journey of clarifying their own beliefs, values, and core principles, and who are clear on the multiple dimensions of each employee, are better positioned to assist them on the road to full engagement. With the knowledge gained from this literature review, I was better positioned to conduct the research described in the following chapter.



## CHAPTER THREE: CONDUCT OF RESEARCH

### Introduction

The research question in this study was: How do existing leadership practices and how might new leadership practices foster employee engagement and retention? In this section, I describe the research methodology and all of the steps completed during the action research. I also discuss the process used to select the study participants and gather and analyze the data. Also detailed are how the ethical issues were considered and how these issues were addressed while conducting the research.

### Research Approach

This research project examined the role of leadership in fostering an engaged workforce in order to mitigate excessive turnover rates. Action research was the methodology used to develop a clear understanding of the issue in order to implement a collaborative action plan that leads to a better future. According to Stringer (2007), “Action research is a collaborative approach to inquiry or investigation that provides people with the means to take systematic action to resolve a problem” (p. 8). It is the characteristics of action research that enabled members of this organization to share a collaborative understanding of the problem and engaged them in the process that hopefully results in a shared sustainable solution. This type of engagement fosters learning and develops problem-solving competencies within the organization.

There are many themes and descriptions of action research. However, the underlying principles remain the same, in that they represent a participative cyclical process that feeds back on itself, creating knowledge that provides direction for future action. Coghlan and Brannick (2005) described action research as being cyclical in

nature. They identified four basic steps that assist the researcher in helping the sponsor and his/her organization to develop possibilities for a better future. Diagnosing, planning action, taking action, and evaluating action will lead the researcher through this cyclical process that consistently develops knowledge and builds upon itself. Stringer (2007) identified three steps in the action research cycle: look, think, and act (p. 8). The underlying principles remain the same in both models, in that they are both a cyclical process of observation, reflection, and action. It is important to note that the research cycles are not necessarily linear in nature. The overarching research cycles related to an action research project are infused with many smaller action research cycles that operate concurrently. These cycles allow the researcher to develop knowledge that provides direction within the steps that are associated to the overall project.

I conducted my research utilizing both qualitative and quantitative methods. When speaking about qualitative research, Stringer (2007) stated, "It provides the means by which stakeholders centrally affected by the issue investigated explore their experience, gain greater clarity and understanding of events and activities, and use those extended understandings to construct effective solutions to the problem" (p. 20). The participants in my research viewed the organization from their own perspectives, and it was the richness of the individual experiences that I wanted to capture. Palys and Atchison (2008) stated, "but surely it is better to ask respondents directly for their own reasons than for us to try to invent them" (p. 9). Glesne (2006) and Stringer recognized the value of qualitative approaches as methods for understanding an issue by capturing the perspectives of those involved. Patterns develop as the researcher gains greater clarity of how the participants construct the world around them. Through qualitative methods, I

found the commonalities that existed and developed recommendations that are informed by the entire organization.

Quantitative methods were utilized to capture data that aided in understanding the generational and gender differences relative to employee engagement. Stringer (2007) recognized the value of quantitative methods for gathering data that is useful for the purpose of meaning making. The TPS is represented by three generations, which are the X, Y, and Baby Boomers. It was important for me to understand the experiences and differences of each generation in order to recommend leverage opportunities for a better future. In addition to gender and generational differences, I captured leadership competencies and organizational effectiveness factors.

#### Project Participants

Prior to commencing the project, I developed an action research team. I was fortunate enough to enlist the aid of two CEOs from two different organizations that have repeatedly placed on the “50 Best Employers in Canada” list as identified by Hewitt Associates (2007) annual reports. They were a valuable asset, as they both have extensive backgrounds in employee engagement and related organizational best practices. I also included an educator and an executive officer from another police department. This team provided valuable feedback throughout the research project. I utilized the team for interview and survey question development. I did not present them with any data obtained from the TPS nor discuss any issues that came to my attention as a researcher in this organization. As such, I did not have them sign a confidentiality agreement.

Once my action research team was in place, I began the process of soliciting for research participants. I enlisted the aid of the Officer in Charge (OIC) of the TPS human

resource section to assist with selecting interview participants who reflected a fair representation of the organization's 154 police and 46 civilian staff. I chose to interview 10% of the organization's members to obtain a fair representation of gender, years of service, rank, and job description. Once I received the approval of my faculty supervisor and Royal Roads University to commence the project, an email invitation to participate in the interviews was sent out to the entire organization by the OIC of human resources, on my behalf (see Appendix A).

Table 4. *Research Participant Demographics*

Total Length of Service	Gender	Employee Unit	Supervisor Yes/No
2	F	Civilian	N
4	F	Civilian	N
3	F	Civilian	N
4	F	Civilian	N
4	F	Civilian	Y
2	F	Civilian	Y
3	F	Police	N
25	M	Police	N
2	M	Police	N
2	F	Police	N
█	█	█	█
2	M	Police	N
2	M	Police	Y
30	M	Police	N
2	M	Police	N
2	M	Police	N
1	M	Police	N
3	M	Police	N
█	█	█	█

The OIC of human resources chose twenty participants from the respondents who accurately reflected the demographics of the organization. Only nineteen were eventually interviewed due to scheduling conflicts with the final participant. A breakdown of participants is presented in Table 1. You will note two participant's information has been blanked out of the table as there is not enough depth in personnel to sufficiently provide anonymity based on the delineators. Thanks to the OIC of human resources, I was able to receive an excellent mix of participants, which ensured I obtained insights from a very diverse mix of the organization.

Table 5. *Survey Demographics*

Demographic	Percentage of Respondents ( <i>N</i> = 140)
<b>Gender</b>	
Female	29%
Male	71%
<b>Job Type</b>	
Civilian	24%
Police	77%
<b>Tenure (total police service including other departments)</b>	
1 to 5 years	44%
6 to 20 years	11%
Over 20 years	44%
<b>Age range</b>	
19 to 30 years	12%
31 to 45 years	40%
Over 46 years	49%

An invitation to participate in the survey was sent out by Chief Officer Clapham to every member of the organization with an email link to Survey Monkey (Finley, 2008), an online survey provider (see Appendix B). The survey began with a preamble that

informed them of the confidential nature of the survey as well as advising them that by completing the survey they have consented to partaking in the research (see Appendix C). Of the 200 possible respondents, 140 people completed the survey, representing 70% of the organization. A general breakdown of survey participants is presented in Table 5 (note, percentages may total over or under 100% due to rounding).

The TPS has a working group comprised from a cross-section of members from their organization. They are a leadership team who are responsible for implementing the organization's strategic plan. I made a request to the TPS manager of policy and planning to use this team as a focus group due to their intimate knowledge of the current state and the future plans of the organization. The manager agreed with this request and sent out an invitation to the members of this team with an attached document provided by me explaining the purpose of the focus group (see Appendix D). Of the 12 possible participants, 7 agreed to participate.

#### Research Methods and Tools

I conducted my research using an appreciative inquiry approach. According to Watkins and Mohr (2001), "Appreciative Inquiry focuses on the generative and life-giving forces in the system, the things we want to increase. By 'inquiry' we mean the process of seeking to understand through asking questions" (p. 14). By framing my inquiry in this method, I engaged the participants with a view to future possibilities. In doing so, I in no way meant to be naive to the current realities of the organization. I acknowledged there was a value in the participants voicing their thoughts on what was and is. However, by capitalizing on current strengths and visioning towards a better future, change is possible and only limited by imagination and initiative.

## Validity and Trustworthiness

I utilized three research methods to draw out the quantitative and qualitative data in this research. Interviews, survey, and a focus group assisted me in triangulating the data as well as develop participant-based recommendations for the sponsor. According to Glesne (2006), “The use of multiple data-collection methods contributes to the trustworthiness of the data” (p.36). Stringer (2007) supported this when commenting on the enhanced credibility of data when multiple sources of information are incorporated. My literature review supported the data gathered at all stages of the research.

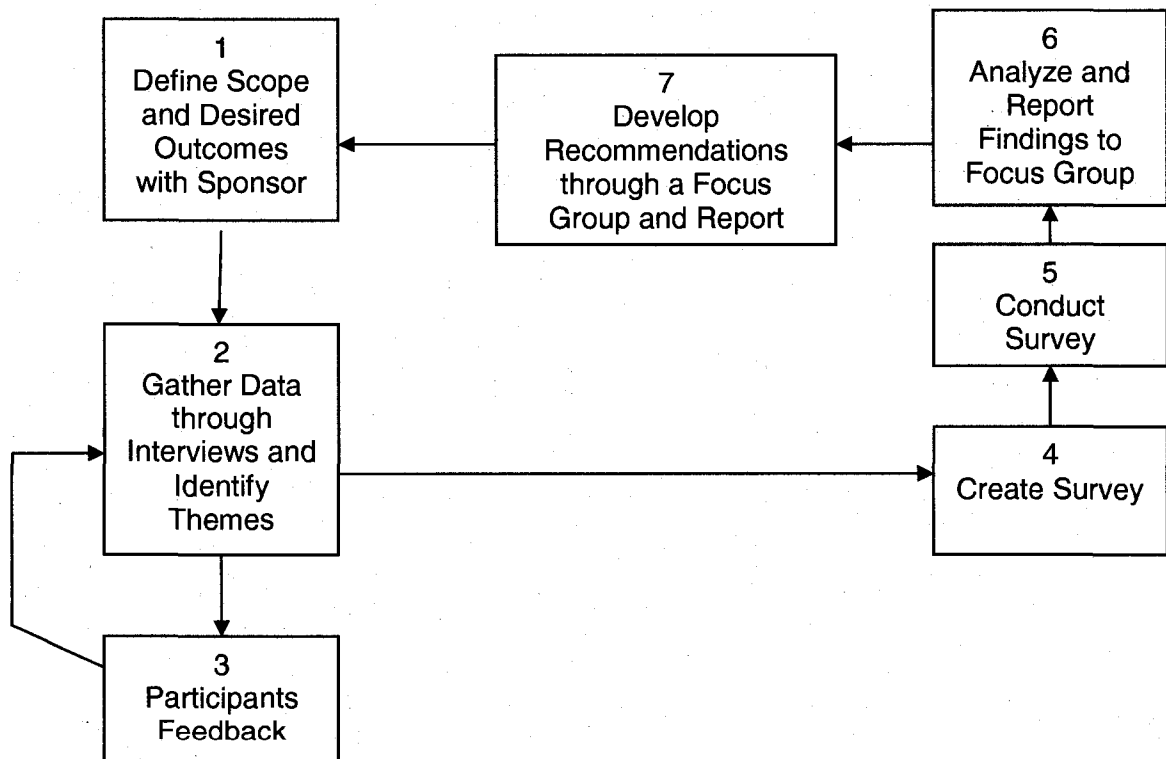


Figure 2. Phases of research.

### Study Conduct

A combination of qualitative and quantitative data gathering tools was used to explore the research question: interviews, survey, and focus group. The various phases of the study are presented in Figure 1.

The first step in this project was to meet with my sponsor and clarify the scope of the research, as well as develop a clear sense of what outcomes he hoped to achieve. Fortunately, my sponsor is well versed in the process involved in this type of research due to his previous experience as a sponsor for other Masters in Leadership and Training students.

#### *Interviews*

I developed a set of five interview questions based on an appreciative inquiry model. I pilot tested these questions with my action research team. Through their input, these questions were reduced to four because one was determined to be a leading question (see Appendix E). The participants were informed of the basic philosophy behind appreciative inquiry. Although I had prepared an initial set of questions, I was open to the interview moving in any direction. Glesne (2006) likened an interview to a baseball game. The analogy is a powerful one that describes the interviewer as a pitcher throwing questions to your respondents that you want hit well into every corner of your data park. You want your questions thrown in such a way that they stimulate information that you, as the researcher, did not anticipate. As Stringer (2007) explained, interviews are opportunities for the participants to explore and describe a situation in their own terms (p. 69).



It was made known to the participants that all interviews would be conducted on “company time” at a location that best suited their needs. Due to the fluid nature of police work, eight interviews were conducted at the TPS main office in New Westminster, one in a police car in Surrey, one at a sub-office in Vancouver, and the remainder over the phone. Two of these phone interviews were conducted on the employee’s personal time. The majority of the interviews were completed in approximately one hour as described in the invitation to participate (see Appendix A); two went as long as two hours at the request of the participants. Prior to commencing the face-to-face interviews, I had the participants read and sign the consent to participate form (see Appendix F). For those participants interviewed over the phone, I read the consent form in its entirety and advised them I would be taping their consent with their permission. Each phone interview participant agreed to this method and agreed to participate. All of the interviews were taped, and I took handwritten notes as a back-up. Throughout the interviews, I summarized comments to ensure I was receiving the information as was intended.

Four common themes were identified through an analysis of the interview data (see Appendix G). These themes were sent back to the interview participants for their feedback and were eventually used to form the content of the survey.

### *Survey*

The electronic survey was the second phase of the research. It was utilized to target all of the TPS police members and civilian staff. According to Stringer (2007), “Surveys are of limited utility in the first phases of an action research process, because they provide very limited information and are likely to reflect the perspective, interests, and agendas of the researcher” (p. 78). By the very nature of an electronic survey,

members and staff were afforded anonymity and the freedom to respond individually and candidly. The disadvantage of an electronic survey was there was no opportunity for me to clear up ambiguities or misunderstandings in the questions. In order to mitigate the chances of the forgoing, I composed the survey questions with the input of my action research team to ensure that the clarity and intent of each question would eliminate as much ambiguity as possible.

I developed four sections within the survey in order to capture quantitative and qualitative data necessary to answer the research question (see Appendix H). The survey contained measurements that spoke specifically to the themes developed at the interview phase of this project. The survey questions were pilot tested utilizing my action research team. The survey was further reviewed by my project supervisor for clarity and intent. There were minor adjustments made to some of the wording to make them clearer. Further, some questions were broken into two questions to improve their specificity. It was determined by pilot testing that the survey could be completed in about twenty minutes. Finally, there were two points in the survey that allowed respondents to add open-ended comments so that everyone in the organization could voice their concerns, perspectives, and insights. Therefore, the survey results yielded a wider organizational perspective of the issues. This process assisted in validating the data received through my interviews and literature review by means of triangulation. Each source of data supported and further built on the previous source, confirming the overall accuracy of the data developed in this research project.

*Focus Group*

Focus groups are essentially a group interview, where individuals are given the opportunity to express their own perspectives on identified topics. It is the nature of a focus group to facilitate a spontaneous flow of information as individuals build on each other's views. Stringer (2007) stated, "As with interviews, carefully devised questions provide the means to focus the group on the issue at hand and enable them to express their experience and perspectives in their own terms, without the constraints of interpretive frameworks" (p. 74). It is the quality of a focus group that enabled the participants in my research to build on their own understanding of employee engagement. Aided by the results of the survey, the focus group assisted in identifying organizational strengths and areas requiring improvement that aided in the development of the recommendations that were submitted to the project sponsor.

The focus group was conducted in the board room at the TPS main office. Once the participants arrived, I had them all read and sign a consent to participate form that included issues such as confidentiality and their right to withdraw from the group at any time (see Appendix I). Further, they were informed that any data that they provided would be vetted out of the final product on their request. True to action research methodology, each participant was provided a written update of the themes developed at the interview phase as well as the results of one question from the survey phase (see Appendix J). The intent of the focus group was to build on the most important engagement drivers that were identified in the organization wide survey.

The group was presented with six flip charts with one of the top six engagement drivers, as identified in the survey, as a heading on each chart. The focus group was

divided into three groups, and each group was given one chart. They were asked to discuss and write comments on the chart that reflected what the organization is currently doing well and where the organization could improve. They were also provided a space to make recommendations. Once a group finished with one engagement driver, they passed the chart to the group on the right and began working on another chart adding their own information and building on the information from the previous group. The process continued until each group had an opportunity to make comments on each of the six engagement drivers. The entire process took 1½ hours. The resulting data were analyzed and commonalities emerged. This qualitative data were useful for making final recommendations when taken as a whole with the interview and survey data.

#### Data Analysis

I analyzed the large amount of data collected from the interviews. I utilized multiple methods in order to identify themes in the data. I utilized methods such as “Pawing” and “Cutting and Sorting” as described by Ryan and Bernard (2003, p. 11). For example, in the first method, I used multiple coloured highlighters to identify common terminology, statements, and emotions. I later cut and sorted quotes into similar piles in order to identify themes and sub-themes. I then went through the data and separated it into two categories: drivers and outcomes of employee engagement. These two categories were further delineated in order to identify themes in each. The themes were compared and contrasted in order to reveal a richer understanding of the data. Throughout the process, I referred back to the taped interviews in order to bring more clarity to points made where my note taking was incomplete or rushed.

Having completed the data analysis, the themes were sent back to the interview participants for their input. I received several emails complimenting the summary of the interviews as well as the themes that were developed. I received one email providing further input. I placed a phone call to that participant and discussed the feedback. We determined that the information was adequately covered in the themes. Further, as we discussed the survey content, it was apparent the issue would be explored in adequate detail.

The results of the survey identified generational, seniority, work unit, and gender differentials that were related to varying degrees of employee engagement. I was also able to quantify the level of importance placed on each driver and outcome. Gaps were identified between where the organization is and where participants would like to be. Further, I was able to quantify the organization's current level of engagement, which will be used for comparison purposes when employee engagement is measured after any recommendations are implemented.

#### Ethical Issues

As my research involved human participants, I was accountable to the Royal Roads University Research Ethics Board to ensure my research conformed to the eight guiding ethical principles outlined in the Tri-Council Policy Statement (Canadian Institutes of Health Research, Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council of Canada, Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada [Tri-Council], 1998). Due to the collaborative nature of this research, further consideration was given to the Royal Roads University (2007) policy on integrity and misconduct, in particular, but not limited to, the recognition of the substantive contribution of those collaborators.

As I was a police officer doing research in another police department, I was cognizant at all times of the potential to bring my own biases to bear on the research. As Coghlan and Brannick (2005) stated, “You may assume too much and so not probe as much as if you were an outsider and ignorant of the situation. You may think you know the answer and not expose your current thinking to alternative reframing” (p. 62). I ensured I made use of my sponsor and research team in order to receive a variety of perspectives to keep my biases in check.

It was of the utmost importance that the participants understood the value of their uninhibited input, regardless of seniority, experience, or position in the organization. As stated by Glesne (2006), “By providing the opportunity to reflect on and voice answers to your questions, you assist them to understand some aspect of themselves better” (p. 143). I was cognizant of the potential vulnerability some of the participants may have felt and alleviated their concerns at the outset by sufficiently covering the confidential nature of my research during the preamble to all interviews, the survey, and the focus group (see Appendices C, F, and I).

#### *Respect for Human Dignity*

Without the voluntary participation of the members in the TPS, I had no research project. I ensured at all times that the participants in this research were treated with the utmost respect and dignity. At all times, I took into consideration the best interests of all those involved in the process by erring on the side of caution to ensure there was never a breach of trust. I ensured all participants felt valued and heard. As stated by Glesne (2006), “By listening to participants carefully and seriously, you give them a sense of importance and specialness” (p. 143).

*Respect for Free and Informed Consent*

This research involved data collection through qualitative interviews, surveys, and focus groups. As such, informed consent was defined and articulated to all of the participants, including their right to withdraw from the study at any time. When speaking of informed consent, Stringer (2007) stated, "One of the principal tools to ensure this is to clearly inform them of the purpose, aims, use of results, and likely consequences of the study" (p. 54). Palys and Atchison (2008) stated, "Their consent, when and if they give it, it should be based on honest and complete information regarding what their participation will involve" (p. 74). Informed consent was obtained in the interviews and focus groups by way of a form letter (see Appendices F and I). Informed consent was obtained for the survey by way of form letter of introduction that included an explanation that returning the survey indicates their consent (see Appendix C). I tape recorded both the focus group and interviews. I ensured that all participants were made aware of this tool and included this information in the signed informed consent form.

*Respect for Vulnerable Persons*

Vulnerable people are individuals who have a reduced capability of ensuring their rights have been protected and respected such as children and institutionalized persons. They are entitled to protection against exploitation and discrimination (Tri-Council, 1998, p. i.5). I did not include any vulnerable persons, as described by the Tri-Council, in my research project.

*Respect for Privacy and Confidentiality*

Respect for human dignity also implies the principles of respect for privacy and confidentiality. I informed all participants in writing of my intent regarding the

collection, use, and storage of all data collected during the research project. Glesne (2006) acknowledged that “participants have a right to expect that when they give you permission to observe and interview, you will protect their confidences and preserve their anonymity” (p. 138). I completed a detailed summary of themes developed during the interview process. This detailed summary was vetted of any identifiers and provided to all of the participants on an individual basis in order to secure their agreement that what they said was accurately reflected in the summary. Participants were invited to add any further information or correct anything that was misinterpreted.

#### *Respect for Justice and Inclusiveness*

I ensured every member had an opportunity to be heard either through an interview, focus group, or survey. I ensured there was a fair cross section of participants at the interview phase. This included consideration of age, gender, rank, and seniority. The survey was offered to all employees in the organization to ensure every perspective was taken into consideration.

#### *Balancing Harms and Benefits*

The harms and benefits of this research were considered. The Tri-Counsel (1998) articulates the need to ensure foreseeable harms should not outweigh any anticipated benefits of the research to ensure a favourable harms-benefit balance (p. i.6). The research results could negatively portray the organization’s past or current leadership. Further, the client may not provide support for any change based on the results. This will effectively devalue the participant’s input and leave a feeling of not being heard. On the positive side, simply due to the nature of the research, a thoughtful discourse on current leadership competencies, as well as current business practices, provided a learning



experience for all involved. Further, the collaborative understanding of what constitutes effective leadership and employee engagement added to the knowledge base of all the participants, and that alone may promote a better workplace for all members of the organization.

#### *Minimizing Harm*

Throughout my research, I was cognizant that individual participants could have felt they had placed themselves in a vulnerable position due to their participation in the research. I included in my research informed consent a method for any participant to contact the researcher or an identified third party should they have any concerns (see Appendices C, F, and I). No concerns were brought to my attention or that of the third party. In the interest of capturing data that is specific to the TPS, the use of human participants was required. I ensured that the methods and tools used were relevant to my research in order to draw out only the data needed to assist in answering my research question. Free and informed consent was discussed at every step of the research project, including the right for the participants to withdraw at any time without prejudice.

#### *Maximizing Benefit*

Palys and Atchison (2008) stated, “Both researchers and participants often share the belief that something is important and both hope their actions will produce knowledge that will benefit the greater good” (p. 71). It was critical, in the client/consultant relationship with my sponsor, that he was fully informed of the research results. This was done regardless of my sponsor’s potential to perceive the results in a negative or positive manner. Further, the research participants were considered as clients in this project, as the outcomes may potentially affect their current business practices. In the interest of this

relationship, the participants received full disclosure of the research results. Prior to initiating the research, all participants were made aware of any foreseeable limitations in terms of my ability to assist in the change initiatives resulting from the research.

#### Summary

In summary, the data collecting tools used in this research were selected to give the entire organization an opportunity to be heard. Further, the large number of interviews conducted in this research ensured a high level of comfort that the themes developed were an accurate reflection of the entire organization. The findings in each phase of the research enabled me to build on the data already received and influenced the development of the subsequent phase of research.

## CHAPTER FOUR: RESULTS AND CONCLUSIONS

### Introduction

The research question in this study was: How do existing leadership practices and how might new leadership practices foster employee engagement and retention? In this chapter, I describe the findings from the participant interviews, the survey, and the focus group conducted for this study. Discussion of the conclusions derived from the research findings, as well as the scope and limitations of the research, are also described.

### Interview Findings

Nineteen people participated in the interviews. They were a combination of civilian and police employees from both supervisor and non supervisor roles within the organization. There were four overarching themes identified during the interview stage of this project. The five emergent themes are all related to employee engagement and include the importance of: (a) challenging work, (b) growth and development, (c) clearly defined goals and objectives, (d) a collaborative work environment, and (e) relationship skills. These themes were developed through analyzing the data collected in seeking answers to the four interview questions:

1. Tell me about the best times you have had with your organization?
2. Tell me about a time you felt most involved in your work and organization?
3. What are the things you value deeply about yourself and your work?
4. What three things do you wish for this organization that would make this a place where you want to stay and feel inspired to do your best work?

It is important to state that the emergent themes are simply commonalities that impact the engagement level of the employees in this organization. They are not areas

that have been identified as areas of strength or areas in need of improvement. The following is a synopsis of the qualitative data that revealed the identified themes.

### *Importance of Challenging Work*

Interview participants identified challenging work as being critical to their engagement. Within this theme, areas identified as important were variety in work performed and a supervisor's support and recognition for initiative and innovation.

Participants identified variety in assignments as an essential component in maintaining a challenging work environment. They felt assignments in different specialty sections within the organization would create significant challenges that would keep them motivated. One participant stated, "For me to be constantly challenged in my work, it is essential that there is variety in my current job as well as an opportunity to move into different sections." Another participant was excited about the potential opportunity of assignments to an integrated police unit, stating, "They are an important opportunity for us. It looks like we will have greater opportunities in the future to try out different types of work altogether—like the Olympics and the Gang Task Force."

Receiving support and encouragement from supervisors for developing and initiating innovative ways to perform their duties was crucial to building challenge within their jobs. For example, police officers spoke a great deal about "not being just ticket writers"; they understood the need for this type of enforcement, but felt a variety of enforcement methods or focuses enhances their level of satisfaction. One participant stated, "Being progressive and innovative is important to me. My supervisor allows us to develop our own plans to accomplish our job." Another participant commented, "I have really enjoyed having autonomy in developing projects." The majority of participants felt

supported by their supervisors, as long as the initiatives were well thought out and related to their job function.

### *Importance of Growth and Development*

Interview participants identified growth and development opportunities as being critical to their engagement. Within this theme, areas identified as important were training and an employee development plan. To a lesser extent, and particular to police officers with less than five years of service, were career advancement opportunities.

The issue of training was critical to almost everyone. There was a great deal of consensus that the department provides good training opportunities, but there were differences related to what group receives the “lion’s share” of the training. One participant commented, “We receive great training, although often I feel it is directed at the junior members to keep them interested.”

One participant commented on how they felt when they received training stating: “Training makes me feel that ‘they’ have an interest in us.” Another commented, “I want to develop the skills I need to get the job done. I feel supported in this from my supervisor. There is no shortage of courses offered.”

Although the terminology used was not always the same, the intent and value of an employee development plan was discussed by two-thirds of the interview participants. Having a sense of direction in terms of future assignments and opportunities was important. Equally important was a clear plan detailing the development required to move into the assignment or opportunity. One participant stated, “I would like to have an idea as to where I am going in this organization. A plan that gives me a sense of direction would help with long-term commitment to the organization.” A senior member stated that

development was not an issue of concern for him as he approached retirement, but he could clearly see the need to provide a clear plan for younger members in order to build commitment. Several participants commented on the important role of their supervisor in supporting their future goals, as well as assisting them in identifying development opportunities and experiences.

### *Importance of Clearly Defined Goals and Objectives*

Interview participants identified goals and objectives as an issue that affects their engagement. Primarily, the issue of goals and objectives was discussed within the context of accountability. Within this theme, areas identified as important were clarity of the organization's goals and objectives and employees being held accountable in accomplishing these goals and objectives.

The organization has a strategic plan in place that has clearly defined priorities, goals, and objectives (TPS, 2007a). Further, individuals' action plans are in place that identify projects and initiatives with assigned responsibilities. Employees, whether police or civilian, expressed the importance of people at every level in the organization being held accountable for accomplishing the identified goals and objectives. However, there was some ambiguity in relation to understanding the plan at an operational level. One participant commented, "I would like more clarity on the goals of my shift and how I will be evaluated in accomplishing those goals." Another participant stated, "I have worked on different shifts, and I would love to see a level of consistency across shifts on how I will be evaluated in getting the job done." Another participant echoed this, stating, "Every shift should have the same goals, and everyone should be evaluated by how well they accomplish those goals."

In relation to supervisors, one participant stated clearly, “Accountability is a big issue at every level. In order to be successful, management needs to hold all supervisor’s accountable for accomplishing goals and tasks.” Many participants commented on being more motivated when their supervisor set work objectives in line with the organization’s goals and objectives. One participant stated, “I like to know the purpose of my job. When I understand why I am doing something, I become more involved.”

*The Importance of a Collaborative Work Environment*

Interview participants identified the importance of a collaborative work environment as being critical to their engagement. Within this theme, areas identified as important were communication and input into decision making.

The importance of unfiltered communication from the top down was mentioned by the majority of participants. When speaking of collaboration, one participant commented on the importance of back-and-forth communication between senior leadership and the rank and file when he stated,

Communication between the senior leadership and the ‘little people’ is disjointed. The ‘rumour mill’ between senior leadership and the end user often prevents a clear, final message from going back and forth. This has improved somewhat with the Chief’s weekly messages.

Another participant stated,

Communication that is unobstructed goes a long way in providing a sense of transparency and building trust. Transparent communication seems to be a priority in this organization. This is very important to me if I am going to support new initiatives.

A great deal of the comments related to the direction the organization was taking. One participant stated, “I need to know the direction we are taking in this organization and being a part of the decisions—that builds buy-in.”

The opportunity to collaborate on projects and be a part of decision-making plays an important part in engaging employees. Participants felt empowered when their input was valued. As one participant stated, “Giving input into a project and being a part of the decision-making is something I like. It is tough when your opinion doesn’t count.” Another participant commented, “Involvement between groups and teams gives me a feeling of working together for a common purpose. I like to be heard.” Finally, in relation to collaboration, a participant stated, “I was excited about the new Chief; he sent out a message of empowerment and team work that has generated enthusiasm on my part.”

#### *The Importance of Relationship Skills*

Interview participants identified relationship skills as being critical to their engagement. Within this theme, areas identified as important were supervisors, at every level, are required to demonstrate a genuine interest in the employee’s well-being and in treating employees with dignity and respect.

Supervisors at every level communicating a clear message, in word and action, that they are interested in the well-being of employees were a very important issue. As one participant stated, “I appreciate that we have a ways to go, but knowing that ‘they’ care about us is as important as getting there.” Another participant commented, “I feel supported from management. I think there is a real effort from supervisors to balance your outside life with work. I feel I can go to my boss and he will make every effort to assist where I need it.”

When speaking of dignity and respect, one participant said it best:

I spend as much time here as I do at home. I feel like the people here are family. I have had a bad experience here that really made it difficult to show up—let alone do a good job.



Conversely, other participants spoke of extra effort put out due to the relationship they have with their supervisors. One participant commented, "I get along really well with my supervisor; I feel he really cares. Lots of times, I have put in extra hours or worked through lunch based on our relationship. I know I will get treated fairly in the long-run."

The interview themes were then utilized to inform the development of the organization-wide survey. The results of which enabled an in-depth analysis of the data to identify strength and improvement areas.

#### Survey Findings

Of the approximately 200 participants who could have responded to the online survey, 140 did. As a result, the response rate was 70%. According to Connolly and Connolly (2006), this is an exceptional response rate. They provided statistical guidelines that contend 132 respondents would be a sufficient number in order to draw conclusions about a group of 200 people (p. 31). With a seventy percent participation rate, we can have confidence that there is less than a 5% chance that the data could have occurred by chance.

#### *Survey Characteristics*

The survey included 48 statements (see Appendix H). Respondents were asked to rate each statement on a 5-point Likert scale (i.e., 1 = Strongly Disagree to 5 = Strongly Agree). The 5-point scale was grouped as follows: (a) unfavourable ratings (1s and 2s); (b) neutral ratings (3s); and (c) favourable ratings: (4s and 5s).

The percentages were calculated based on the number of responses within each of these groups. All statements were grouped under one of four content areas: (a) how employees feel about their work, (b) employees' assessment of how the organization is

doing in terms of common engagement drivers, (c) employees' assessment of how well their supervisors are conducting themselves in relation to behaviours that foster employee engagement, and (d) employees' assessment of how well the senior leadership are conducting themselves in relation to behaviours that foster employee engagement.

*Survey Results Based on Favourable Ratings*

The percentage of respondents who rated the statements as favourable (Agreed or Strongly Agreed with the statements) is presented in Tables 6 to 12. Over 75% favourable means very positive—a real strength, and from 67% to 74% means positive—a strength.

Survey participants' responses reflecting how they feel about their work are presented in Table 6. The data were broken down to compare civilian and sworn police ratings. Their combined ratings are shown to illustrate the organization's overall ratings. In general, employees have an overall positive feeling for their work. Of note, there are many commonalities in how these groups rated the majority of these statements. However, civilians rated themselves approximately 30% lower than police in statements related to training, resources, and being treated with respect.

How the organization is doing related to a set of ten common engagement drivers that were verified as being important to the employees at the interview phase of this project are presented in Table 7.

Table 6. *How Employees Feel about Their Work (% choosing favourable)*

Statement	Organization	Civilian	Police
I care about the future of my organization.	100%	100%	100%
I am committed to seeing this organization succeed.	96%	100%	94%
I am doing something I consider satisfying and worthwhile in my job.	91%	87%	94%
The work I do is very important to the success of the organization.	89%	88%	90%
I am proud to be a part of this organization.	83%	80%	85%
I understand how my unit contributes to the organization's success.	83%	84%	82%
My job is challenging and interesting	81%	80%	82%
I am satisfied with the level of balance between my work and personal life.	81%	78%	85%
I am confident the organization is preparing itself for future challenges.	80%	71%	82%
I have the training I need to do my job.	76%	50%	84%
I am treated with dignity and respect.	73%	52%	80%
I understand how my role relates to the organization's goals and objectives.	72%	62%	75%
I have the resources to do my job.	59%	37%	66%
I am given an opportunity to present and try new ideas.	57%	51%	62%
I believe my career aspirations can be achieved in this organization.	57%	56%	60%
I am satisfied with my opportunity for growth and development.	56%	41%	65%
I am involved with decisions that affect my work.	51%	55%	52%
I have a clear picture of the direction in which the organization is heading.	46%	52%	45%
Total Averages	74%	69%	77%

Table 7. *Employee Ratings of Engagement Drivers (% choosing favourable)*

Statement	Organization	Civilian	Police
Organization cares a great deal about the community we serve.	83%	80%	86%
Organization provides challenging work.	70%	65%	71%
Employees have resources needed to perform jobs in high-quality way.	63%	44%	70%
Employees are provided appropriate growth and development opportunities.	62%	55%	71%
Organization provides career advancement opportunities.	60%	47%	66%
Organization promotes a collaborative work environment.	59%	36%	67%
Senior management has a sincere interest in employees' well being.	59%	32%	65%
Employees have appropriate decision-making input.	55%	32%	62%
Senior management communicates a clear vision for long-term success.	46%	49%	53%
Employees have a clear understanding of the organization's goals and objectives.	46%	58%	44%

There are three generations working within the TPS; Baby Boomers (1945–1964), Generation X (1965–1981), and Generation Y (1982–2000). Due to the TPS being a very young organization, there were hiring requirements that made these groups very distinct. For example: 44% of the police officers have over 20 years of service (Boomers); 44% of the police officers have under 5 years of service (Gen Y and X); and 12% of the police officers have 6 to 20 years of service (Boomers and Gen X). For the purposes of my

research, it was more useful to separate the groups by tenure than generation. These distinct groups rated how well their organization was doing related to the common engagement drivers (see Table 8).

Table 8. *Engagement Drivers Scores Compared by Police Tenure (% choosing favourable)*

Statement	Years of Tenure		
	1 to 5	6 to 20	Over 20
Organization cares a great deal about the community we serve.	87%	57%	96%
Organization provides challenging work.	63%	57%	90%
Employees have resources needed to perform jobs in high-quality way.	55%	64%	83%
Employees are provided appropriate growth and development opportunities.	66%	71%	79%
Organization provides career advancement opportunities.	63%	57%	78%
Organization promotes a collaborative work environment.	72%	36%	71%
Senior management has a sincere interest in employees' well being.	71%	36%	65%
Employees have appropriate decision-making input.	61%	71%	63%
Senior management communicates a clear vision for long-term success.	52%	28%	58%
Employees have a clear understanding of the organization's goals and objectives.	41%	28%	54%

Employees were then asked to pick the top five common engagement drivers in order of importance. They are ordered 1 through 10 based on the number of times the

engagement driver was chosen as a top 5 item. The responses from the entire police and civilian groups in the organization are compared in Table 9. Of note, civilians and police chose the same top 5 engagement drivers.

Table 9. *Engagement Drivers Rank Ordered*

Statement	Rank Order		
	Organization	Police	Civilian
Resources to get the job done	1	1	5
Senior management's interest in employees well being	2	2	1
Growth and development opportunities	3	3	3
Challenging work	4	4	2
Collaborative work environment	5	5	4
Clearly defined organizational goals and objectives	6	6	8
Career advancement opportunities	7	7	7
Appropriate decision-making input	8	9	6
Senior management communicates clear vision for long-term success	9	8	9
Organization cares about the community we serve	10	10	10

The data presented in Table 10 serves to illustrate how length of service played a significant role in the level of importance each group placed on any one engagement driver. The “over 20 years” category is comprised entirely of the Baby Boomer generation, whereas the “1 to 5 years” category is over 75% Gen X. The difference in the order an engagement driver was chosen may speak to generational values or the stage

each person is at in their career. For example, challenging work, growth and development, and career advancement are more important to the junior police officers than to their senior coworkers.

Table 10. *Engagement Drivers Rank Ordered by Police Tenure Preferences*

Statement	Years of Tenure		
	1 to 5	6 to 20	Over 20
Challenging work	1	7	6
Growth and development opportunities	2	4	7
Resources to get the job done	3	1	2
Senior management's interest in employees well-being	4	6	1
Career advancement opportunities	5	9	9
Clearly defined organizational goals and objectives	6	8	3
Collaborative work environment	7	3	4
Appropriate decision-making input	8	2	10
Senior management communicates clear vision for long-term success	9	5	5
Organization cares about the community we serve	10	10	8

Employees were then asked to assess how well their supervisors conduct themselves in relation to behaviours that foster employee engagement (see Table 11). Employees were then asked to assess how well their senior leadership team conduct themselves in relation to behaviors that foster employee engagement (see Table 12).

Table 11. *Employee Assessment of Supervisors (% choosing favourable)*

Statement	Organization	Police	Civilian
My supervisor makes decisions promptly when needed.	77%	84%	62%
I would feel comfortable going to my supervisor with a concern.	69%	75%	55%
My supervisor is fair in dealing with people.	69%	79%	48%
My supervisor gives me adequate feedback on the work that I do	69%	64%	49%
My supervisor helps me overcome barriers to getting the job done.	68%	75%	54%
My supervisor communicates clearly and openly.	67%	73%	49%
My supervisor ensures that I am adequately informed about matters affecting me.	67%	73%	45%
My supervisor is open to and supportive of innovative ways to accomplish the goals and objectives of the organization.	66%	71%	58%
My supervisor sets clear goals and objectives that are linked to the goals and objectives of the organization.	62%	65%	48%
My supervisor holds people accountable for their performance.	59%	64%	49%
My supervisor takes a supportive role in my professional growth and development.	57%	62%	45%
My supervisor ensures that people who do a good job are recognized and appreciated.	53%	73%	45%
It is clear to me how my supervisor will evaluate my performance.	49%	50%	49%
My supervisor recognizes and rewards initiative and innovation.	46%	52%	35%
My supervisor sets work objectives that motivate people.	43%	46%	36%
Total Averages	61%	66%	49%



Table 12. *Employee Assessment of Senior Leadership (% choosing favourable)*

Statement	Organization	Police	Civilian
Senior management is taking steps to ensure the organization's long-term success.	68%	60%	70%
Senior management supports new ideas and innovative ways of doing things.	64%	69%	45%
Senior management has sincere interest in employees' well being.	59%	65%	32%
Senior management communicates openly and honestly.	48%	52%	43%
Senior management clearly communicates the immediate and long-term goals of the organization.	51%	53%	49%
Senior management holds employees accountable at all levels in accomplishing the immediate and long-term goals of the organization.	42%	47%	42%
Total Averages	55%	58%	47%

It is important to note that in Tables 11 and 12, lower scores do not necessarily indicate an overall weakness in any given area. The tables do, however, serve to illustrate some potential opportunities for improvement. The following section will deal with those issues in more detail and identify some high leverage areas.

#### *Survey Results Based on Unfavourable Ratings*

The percentage of respondents who rated the statements as unfavourable (Disagreed or Strongly Disagreed with the statements) are presented in Tables 13 to 19. A response rate from 25% to 34% unfavourable means the item represents an area for improvement. A response rate of over 35% unfavourable means the item represents a

critical issue that requires immediate attention. As illustrated in Tables 13 to 19, there is a clear disparity between the civilian staff and female police and police overall.

*Civilians (24% of the Entire Organization)*

Even though the civilian group had an overall engagement rating of 69% favourable as reported in Table 6, they provided considerably lower favourable reports in Table 11, Supervisor Assessment, and Table 12, Senior Leadership Assessment, in comparison to police ratings.

Civilians provided an assessment of their supervisors that, in every category except one, was identified as a critical issue that requires immediate attention. The average overall unfavourable rating in this category was 40% (these stats are based on an analysis of data and are not represented in any table). As there was no delineation between their supervisors being either police personnel or other civilian staff, this area needs further exploration. Civilians reported various percentages of unfavourable in assessing their own engagement level (see Table 13).

Table 13. *Civilian Engagement Level (% choosing unfavourable)*

Statement	% of Responses
I have the training I need to do my job.	31%
I am treated with dignity and respect.	33%
I have the resources to do my job.	35%
I believe my career aspirations can be achieved in this organization.	30%
I am satisfied with my opportunity for growth and development.	42%
I am involved with decisions that affect my work.	45%
I have a clear picture of the direction in which the organization is heading.	35%

Civilians reported various percentages of unfavourable when rating the organization in terms of common engagement drivers (see Table 14).

Table 14. *Civilian Assessment of Common Engagement Drivers (% choosing unfavourable)*

Statement	% of Responses
Employees have resources needed to perform jobs in high-quality way.	40%
Employees are provided appropriate growth and development opportunities.	45%
Organization provides career advancement opportunities.	27%
Organization promotes a collaborative work environment.	39%
Senior management has a sincere interest in employees' well being.	45%
Employees have appropriate decision-making input.	39%
Senior management communicates a clear vision for long-term success.	29%

Finally, percentages of unfavourable ratings in assessing the senior leadership, as reported by civilians, are reported in Table 15.

Table 15. *Civilian Assessment of Senior Leadership (% choosing unfavourable)*

Statement	% of Responses
Senior management communicates openly and honestly.	46%
Senior management has sincere interest in employees' well being.	45%
Senior management clearly communicates the immediate and long-term goals of the organization.	31%
Senior management holds employees accountable at all levels in accomplishing the immediate and long-term goals of the organization	26%

*Female Police (Approximately 10% of Total Police Population)*

Although police overall rated 77% favourable in terms of their engagement level, female police officers rated themselves at 67% (these stats are based on an analysis of data and are not represented in any table). Further, it is significant to note that female officers rated certain areas as unfavourable, where their male counterparts did not (these stats are based on an analysis of data and are not represented in any table).

It is important to note that due to the low number of female respondents (i.e., 12), it takes very few respondents to make a large impact on the percentages. These percentages do, however, warrant further exploration of the issues.

Table 16. *How Females Feel about Their Work (% choosing unfavourable)*

Statement	% of Responses
I believe my career aspirations can be achieved in this organization.	50%
My job is challenging and interesting.	33%
I am proud to be a part of this organization.	33%
I am given the opportunity to present and try new ideas.	33%
I am satisfied with my opportunity for growth and development.	33%
I am involved with decisions that affect my work.	25%
I have a clear picture of the direction in which the organization is heading.	25%

Table 17. *Female Assessment of Common Engagement Drivers (% choosing unfavourable)*

Statement	% of Responses
Organization provides challenging work.	42%
Organization provides career advancement opportunities.	33%
Senior management has a sincere interest in employees' well being.	33%
Senior management communicates a clear vision for long-term success.	25%
Employees have a clear understanding of the organization's goals and objectives.	50%

Table 18. *Female Assessment of Supervisors (% choosing unfavourable)*

Statement	% of Responses
My supervisor sets work objectives that motivate people.	50%
It is clear to me how my supervisor will evaluate my performance.	50%
I would feel comfortable going to my supervisor with a concern.	33%
My supervisor communicates clearly and openly.	33%
My supervisor ensures that I am adequately informed about matters affecting me.	33%
My supervisor gives me adequate feedback on the work that I do	33%
My supervisor ensures that people who do a good job are recognized and appreciated.	33%
My supervisor takes a supportive role in my professional growth and development.	25%
My supervisor helps me overcome barriers to getting the job done.	25%
My supervisor is open to and supportive of innovative ways to accomplish the goals and objectives of the organization.	25%

Table 19. *Female Assessment of Senior Leadership (% choosing unfavourable)*

Statement	% of Responses
Senior management communicates openly and honestly.	41%
Senior management clearly communicates the immediate and long-term goals of the organization.	41%
Senior management has sincere interest in employees' well being.	33%

*Police Overall*

Police as an overall category, male and female combined, reported no areas within the unfavourable threshold as requiring attention. However, when analyzing the police category in terms of tenure, a slightly different picture is drawn for those in the category of 6 to 20 years of service. Tenure was broken down into three groups based on their total police service, including service with other departments: (a) 1 to 5 years (44% of total police officers); (b) 6 to 20 years (11% of total police officers); and (c) over 20 years (44% of total police officers).

Females make up a third of the 6 to 20-year group. As previously identified, females have some issues of concern that may have skewed the overall data given that the entire group of the 6 to 20 years of service totals fourteen. For the purpose of conclusions and recommendations, this years-of-service group reported similar areas of concern as reported by the female group.

*Survey Results of Employees' Intent to Stay with the TPS*

Survey participants were asked to indicate their intent to stay with the TPS in order to provide a bench mark for the impact of any engagement initiatives undertaken by

the organization (see Table 20). It is important to note with these numbers that, once you remove retirements from the calculation, the “plan on staying” group rises to over 80%. Further, the most significant point to be made is the fact that only 2% of the organization is actively looking for another job.

Table 20. *Intent to Stay with the TPS (Civilian and Police Combined)*

Statement	% of Responses <i>N</i> = 140*
Retiring within 1 to 5 years	2%
Retiring within 5 years	15%
Recently consider leaving	17%
Actively looking elsewhere	2%
Plan on staying	64%

#### Focus Group Findings

Through the organization-wide survey, employees identified six top engagement drivers: (a) resources to get the job done, (b) senior management’s interest in employees’ well-being, (c) growth and development opportunities, (d) challenging work, (e) collaborative work environment, and (f) clearly defined organizational goals and objectives. These engagement drivers are similar to the five themes identified during the interview phase as being important in building engagement, which included the importance of: (a) challenging work, (b) growth and development, (c) clearly defined goals and objectives, (d) a collaborative work environment, and (e) relationship skills. The only addition not discussed within the content of the interview themes is resources to get the job done.

The focus group was designed to gain greater insight into these engagement drivers and develop an understanding of what the organization is currently doing well and areas where there might be an opportunity for improvement. The focus group comprised of leaders responsible for different segments of the organization's strategic plan. As such, they provided excellent insights due to their knowledge base.

#### *Importance of Challenging Work*

The focus group identified three areas that are currently being done well: (a) the organization is participating in Joint Force Operations on projects that can be linked to TransLink services or property, (b) there is a plan to create new sections and units now and as the organization grows, and (c) individuals are being allowed to create projects and follow them to fruition. Focus group participants also identified three opportunities for improvement: (a) cross train civilians for different types of work within the organization to provide variety, (b) reduce barriers in providing challenging work created by union due to seniority issues, and (c) provide sufficient resource needed to enable excellence within new units.

#### *Importance of Growth and Development Opportunities*

Focus group participants identified two areas that are currently being done well: providing a variety of training opportunities and a good training budget. They also identified five opportunities for improvement: (a) career path planning, (b) better distribution of training opportunities, (c) more training opportunities for civilian staff, (d) succession planning, and (e) promotion planning.



*Importance of Clearly Defined Organizational Goals and Objectives*

Focus group participants identified three areas that are currently being done well:

(a) Chief communicates his CORE message of connecting/ outreach/ relationships/ exceptional results; (b) Chief's weekly report; and (c) strategic plan action teams. During the focus group discussion, participants also identified four opportunities for improvement: (a) enlighten all personnel on 100 Day Plan, (b) provide clear lines of reporting, (c) put resources behind CORE goals, and (d) do fewer things really well.

*Senior Management's Interest in Employee's Well-Being*

Focus group participants identified five areas that are currently being done well:

(a) Chief communicating clear vision eliminating uncertainty and stress, (b) an onsite gym, (c) renovations to building, (d) educational opportunities, and (e) recognition. Focus group participants also identified four opportunities for improvement: (a) too many deadlines negate work/life balance, (b) a program for improving people's well being, (c) equal support for staff development, and (d) more open communication from the top.

*Resources to Get Job Done*

Focus group participants identified three areas that are currently being done well:

(a) reassessing deployment model/options for impact; (b) expanding current physical/ human/ equipment resources; and (c) meeting hiring targets. Focus group participants also identified three opportunities for improvement: (a) take time to research and evaluate before switching to new equipment and systems, (b) develop a viable deployment model, and (c) put the right people into the right jobs.

*Importance of Collaborative Work Environment*

Focus group participants identified three areas that are currently being done well:

(a) labour management relationship, (b) inviting input into new initiatives, and (c) the concept of team. Focus group participants also identified four opportunities for improvement: (a) inclusion of all functional areas in decision-making, (b) communicating what is being done to avoid duplication of work, (c) more collaboration with TransLink Security, and (d) more consistency at the line supervisor level in the application of rules.

*Project Conclusions*

As my research question suggests, my intent was to identify existing leadership practices (currently being done well) and new leadership practices (opportunities for improvement) that might foster employee engagement and retention within the TPS. In order to fully explore this topic, data were collected, by a variety of methods, from any TPS employee willing to provide input. From analyzing the collected data, five themes related to employee engagement became evident: (a) the importance of challenging work, (b) the importance of growth and development opportunities, (c) the importance of clearly defined goals and objectives, (d) the importance of a collaborative work environment, and (e) the importance of relationship skills.

Regardless of the demographics, the identified themes have played a significant role in fostering engagement in all employees within the TPS. However, the data show there are some significant differences between police and civilian employees in terms of job satisfaction levels, which appear to be related to both supervisory and organizational factors. Further, due to the two distinct groups of police officers related to tenure, some differences arose that are primarily related to the stage in one's career. The conclusions

from this research detail the most significant leadership and organizational factors that affect the value and quality of the five identified themes: (a) importance of challenging work, (b) importance of growth and development, (c) importance of clearly defined goals and objectives, (d) importance of a collaborative work environment, and (e) importance of relationship skills.

### *The Importance of Challenging Work*

During the interviews, variety in work performed and a supervisor's support and recognition for initiative and innovation were identified as being important to providing challenging work. Two statements within the survey measured the participants' level of engagement related to this theme: (a) my job is challenging and interesting (civilian 80% and police 82% favourable); and (b) I am given the opportunity to present and try new ideas (civilian 51% and police 62% favourable). Further, civilians rated the organization as 65% favourable in providing challenging work, and police rated the organization as 71% favourable. The areas currently being done well and opportunities for improvement are presented as part of this discussion.

### *Currently Being Done Well*

As the ratings indicate, overall the TPS is doing well in terms of providing challenging work. In relation to being open and supportive of innovative ways to accomplish goals and objectives, police officers gave their supervisors a favourable rating of 75% and their senior leadership as 69% favourable. The focus group agreed that the organization is aware of the importance of challenging work and is currently working on plans for future opportunities. They also identified existing assignments that provide variety and challenge for their employees. Further, the focus group participants indicated

that employees have the opportunity to create projects and follow them through to fruition.

#### *Opportunity for Improvement*

Civilians rated their supervisors as unfavourable in two areas related to the opportunity for improvement: (a) 35% unfavourable related to being open and supportive of innovative ways to accomplish goals and objectives, and (b) 45% unfavourable related to recognizing and rewarding initiative and innovation. Due to the nature of work, many of the specialty sections and assignments outside of the organization do not apply to civilians. During the focus group, participants expressed that civilian employees should be provided an opportunity for variety and challenge in their work.

#### *The Importance of Growth and Development*

During the interviews, training, and an employee development plans were identified as being important to providing growth and development opportunities. Two statements within the survey measured the participants' level of engagement related to this theme: (a) I have the training I need to do my job (civilian 50% and police 84% favourable); and (b) I am satisfied with my opportunity for growth and development (civilian 41% and police 65% favourable). Further, civilians rated the organization as 55% favourable in providing growth and development opportunities, while police officers rated the organization as 71% favourable. The areas currently being done well and opportunities for improvement are presented as part of this discussion.

#### *Currently Being Done Well*

As these ratings indicate, police officers are more satisfied than their civilian counterparts when it comes to growth and development opportunities. This may be

attributed to the favourable ratings they gave their supervisors in three areas: (a) my supervisor takes a supportive role in my growth and development (62% favourable); (b) my supervisor gives me adequate feedback on the work I do (64% favourable); and (c) my supervisor helps me overcome barriers to getting the job done (75% favourable). The focus group felt that the organization provided variety in training opportunities and had a good training budget.

#### *Opportunity for Improvement*

Civilians rated their supervisors as 45% unfavourable in taking a supportive role in their growth and development, 42% unfavourable in giving adequate feedback on their work, and 54% unfavourable in helping to overcome barriers to getting the job done. The focus group agreed that there should be a better distribution of training opportunities and more training opportunities for civilian staff. They also felt that attention should be paid to succession planning and career pathing.

#### *The Importance of Clearly Defined Goals and Objectives*

During the interviews, areas identified as important in this theme were clarity of the organization's goals and objectives and employees being held accountable in accomplishing these goals and objectives. Two statements within the survey measured the participants' level of engagement related to this theme: I understand how my unit contributes to the organization's success (civilian 84% and police 82% favourable); and I understand how my role relates to the organization's goals and objectives (civilian 62% and police 75% favourable). Further, civilians rated the organization as 58% favourable in providing a clear understanding of goals and objectives, and police officers rated the

organization as 44% favourable. The areas currently being done well and opportunities for improvement are presented as part of this discussion.

#### *Currently Being Done Well*

As the ratings in this discussion indicate, both civilians and police officers have a clear understanding of how their unit and their role relates to the organization's goals and objectives. Police officers rated their supervisors as favourable in the following areas: My supervisor sets clear goals and objectives that are linked to the goals and objectives of the organization (65% favourable); my supervisor holds people accountable for their performance (64% favourable); and it is clear to me how my supervisor will evaluate my performance (50% favourable). The focus group felt that the Chief communicates his CORE message of connecting / outreach / relationships / exceptional results very well, and the organization has designated strategic plan action teams.

#### *Opportunity for Improvement*

Civilians rated their supervisors as: 39% unfavourable in setting clear goals and objectives that are linked to the goals and objectives of the organization, 35% unfavourable in holding people accountable for their performance and 38% unfavourable in providing clarity on how their work is evaluated. The focus group felt that there should be clearer lines of reporting, and resources should be put behind the CORE goals.

#### *The Importance of a Collaborative Work Environment*

During the interviews, areas identified as important in this theme were communication and decision-making input. One statement within the survey measured the participants' level of engagement related to this theme: I am involved with the decisions that affect my work (civilian 55% and police 52% favourable). Further,

employees provided two assessments when rating the organization: (a) the organization promotes a collaborative work environment (civilian 36% and police 67% favourable); and (b) employees have appropriate decision making input (civilian 32% and police 62% favourable). The areas currently being done well and opportunities for improvement are presented as part of this discussion.

#### *Currently Being Done Well*

As the ratings for this theme indicate, police officers are more satisfied than their civilian counterparts when it comes to a collaborative work environment. This may be attributed to the favourable ratings they gave their supervisors in two areas: (a) my supervisor communicates clearly and openly (73% favourable); and (b) my supervisor ensures that I am adequately informed about matters affecting me (73% favourable). The focus group agreed that the organization invites input into new initiatives and is developing the concept of team.

#### *Opportunity for Improvement*

Civilians rated their supervisors as 39% unfavourable in communicating clearly and openly and 49% unfavourable in ensuring they are kept adequately informed about matters affecting them. The focus group participants suggested that there should be more inclusion of all functional areas in decision making and better communication of what is being done to avoid duplication of work.

#### *The Importance of Relationship Skills*

During the interviews, areas identified as important in this theme were a supervisor's genuine interest in the employee's well-being and being treated with dignity and respect. One statement within the survey measured the participants' level of

engagement related to this theme: I am treated with dignity and respect (civilian 52% and police 80% favourable). Further, civilians rated the organization as 32% favourable related to senior management's sincere interest in employees' well-being, and police rated the organization as 65% favourable. The areas currently being done well and opportunities for improvement are presented as part of this discussion.

#### *Currently Being Done Well*

As the ratings in this theme indicate, police officers are more satisfied than their civilian counterparts when it comes to feeling respected and treated with dignity. Further, police officers feel that senior management does have a sincere interest in their well-being. This may be attributed to the favourable ratings they gave their supervisors in the three areas of: (a) I would feel comfortable going to my supervisor with a concern (75% favourable); (b) my supervisor is fair in dealing with people (79% favourable); and (c) my supervisor ensures that people who do a good job are recognized and appreciated (73% favourable). The focus group felt there were numerous activities that work towards a message of genuine concern for the employees: (a) by the Chief communicating a clear vision, there was an elimination of uncertainty and stress; (b) an onsite gym; (c) renovations to building; (d) educational opportunities; and (e) recognition.

#### *Opportunity for Improvement*

Civilians rated their supervisors unfavourable related to the three survey statements: (a) I would feel comfortable going to my supervisor with a concern (39% unfavourable); (b) my supervisor is fair in dealing with people (38% unfavourable); and (c) my supervisor ensures that people who do a good job are recognized and appreciated



(42% unfavourable). The focus group felt that deadlines negate work–life balance, and there should be a program for improving people’s well-being.

#### Scope and Limitations of the Research

This study was designed to seek input from every employee of the TPS through a variety of methods. I interviewed 19 participants, 10% of the organization, and I received 140 responses to the survey, 70% of the organization. My intent was to conduct a focus group with up to 12 participants and only 7 showed up. The focus group sampling was smaller than I expected and did not represent a fair cross section of the entire organization. However, due to the participants’ backgrounds, I feel I received reasonably accurate data that were useful in answering my questions.

During this research, the dispatchers were in the midst of a study that would determine the viability of the TPS utilizing ECOM, a centralized emergency communications centre, as their dispatch centre. As such, their jobs would have been outsourced. They still had job security within TransLink, albeit in a different function. This no doubt played a significant role in their engagement level and that of other civilian employees who have long-term relationships with the dispatchers. Although their study was completed prior to my initiating the survey and the dispatchers will remain a part of the TPS, I can only assume this had an impact on the survey results.

Once I began an analysis of my survey data, it became clear that civilians are supervised by police officers, other civilian employees, or a combination of both. I did not have this differentiated within my survey questions. This left me with a gap in my data in terms of identifying and making a more directed recommendation in terms of leadership training.

### Summary

In this chapter, I have outlined the study findings, which suggested that, while there were significant differences between civilian and police officers in terms of their level of engagement and how they rate their supervisors, there exists commonalities in what fosters their engagement. Those areas where the organization is currently doing well in fostering engagement and those areas where there appears to be an opportunity for improvement were in focus while I developed the recommendations in the following chapter.

## CHAPTER FIVE: RESEARCH IMPLICATIONS

### Introduction

The purpose of this research was to identify leadership and organizational practices that could potentially have the greatest impact on engaging employees within the TPS. In this chapter, I outline the recommendations stemming from the research and practical steps for the organization to further align its organizational and leadership practices to better foster employee engagement and retention. An outline of the processes required to implement the recommendations, as well as possibilities for future research arising from this study, are included in this chapter.

### Study Recommendations

This study followed action research principles. As such, those people who are affected by the issue were included in the process of inquiry (Stinger, 2007). The conclusions arrived at in this study are a direct reflection of the knowledge, experiences, and opinions of the employees within the TPS. The following recommendations are intended to address those areas identified by the research participants as having the greatest effect on their engagement.

1. Implement a leadership training program for all front line supervisors, incorporating the findings of this study, in order to provide the knowledge and skills that will positively influence the engagement of their people.
2. Implement employee development plans.
3. Utilize only your best and brightest police officers as field trainers.
4. Review existing promotional system for sworn members.

5. Implement a cross-functional team comprised of the most effective leaders within the organization with a goal of collaborative and continuous organizational improvement.
6. Senior leaders need to communicate a message that they are sincerely interested in every employee's well being.

*Recommendation One: Implement a Leadership Training Program*

Implement a leadership training program for all front line supervisors, incorporating the findings of this study, in order to provide the knowledge and skills that will positively influence the engagement of their people. Kouzes and Posner (2002) stated, "A key factor in why people stay in organizations is their managers. It's equally important in why people leave organizations. People, in fact, don't generally quit their companies, they quit managers" (p. 20). Their statements are backed up by over 20 years of research and, as such, are to be considered more seriously than mere opinion. Izzo and Withers (2007) echoed this, stating, "Salary and benefits will sway workers, but nine times out of ten it's a respected boss for whom employees get out of bed in the morning, and a despised one for whom they quit" (p. 180). The conclusions section identifies those leadership skills and practices that have the greatest impact on engaging employees within this organization.

As the findings indicate, police officers, as a group, have rated their supervisors as favourable relating to conduct that fosters employee engagement, whereas civilians and female police officers have indicated there is room for improvement. According to Kouzes and Posner (2002), "Leadership is an identifiable set of skills and practices that are available to all of us, not just a few charismatic men and women. The 'great

person'—woman or man—theory of leadership is just plain wrong" (p. 20). I recommend the TPS engage a leadership development consultant who is a specialist in justice and public safety environments to assess the leadership competencies that are perceived by employees to be relevant an important and develop and deliver a pilot training program for front line supervisors that incorporates the findings of this research and includes relationship building, communication, human resource development, and problem solving training. Every effort could ideally be made to equip internal leaders to continue to deliver parts, or all, of this program. Coaching and mentoring skills could also ideally be a part of the training program so that it can be self-sustaining as new leaders are promoted.

*Recommendation Two: Implement Employee Development Plans*

Growth and development was identified as the third most important engagement driver in the TPS. Police officers, as a group, rated the organization as favourable in this area. However, their female coworkers and civilian staff both rated the organization as unfavourable and requiring attention. This represents a high leverage opportunity to better foster engagement by providing employee development plans that align an employee's training and development efforts with the goals and objectives of the organization. This is not a one-sided effort on the part of the organization. Employees need to take responsibility and be held accountable for their own career development.

I recommend that supervisors be trained in the necessary skills that facilitate an employee in developing a plan that is effective and directed. For example: supervisors should identify an employee's development needs related to organizational requirements, help employees identify training and development opportunities that are appropriate and

timely, provide opportunities for employees to discuss their plan in order to make adjustments or confirm the direction taken, and evaluate the outcomes of the plan and incorporate that in the employee's performance appraisal.

A process of accountability should be put in place that ensures supervisors are appropriately partnering with their people on their growth and development. Izzo and Withers (2007) stated,

A well-worn maxim in business is, "What gets measured gets done." In many organizations, managers and supervisors are not held accountable for developing their people. To improve in this area, organizations might begin measuring the extent to which employees feel their careers and development are being managed by supervisors and make scores on those measures a key part of managers' evaluations. (p. 145)

*Recommendation Three: Utilize Only Your Best and Brightest Police Officers  
as Field Trainers*

According to the survey, up to 17% of the employees in this organization intend on retiring within the next five years. Further, the organization will continue to grow in size to meet the future demands of TransLink. Given the likelihood that there will be a steady influx of new recruits over the next several years, there exists an excellent opportunity to utilize field trainers as the organization's front line in building commitment and engagement and in preparing new leaders for the future. I recommend that field trainers would be those who are assessed as being the most competent and caring officers, who are themselves engaged and committed to the organization.

I further recommend that field trainers partake in the leadership training program for two reasons. First, they will receive the necessary training to effectively build a sense of community and partnership within a recruit; and as a matter of practicality, this signals

the importance of the field trainer's duties and provides pre-emptive training to the organization's future leaders.

*Recommendation Four: Review Existing Promotional System for Sworn Members*

As identified in this research, supervisors do impact the level of employee engagement within the TPS. As such, future promotional competitions should include an assessment of the candidate's skills related to fostering employee engagement.

Dimensions such as relationship building, communications, human resource development, and problem solving should be an essential component in any promotional process. Further, these skills should also form a part of all supervisors' performance assessments.

As the TPS is a young police service and future retirements are likely to create several promotable positions, I recommend a thorough review of the current promotional process to ensure the right people are put in place to engage employees in the process of collaboratively achieving the vision for this organization.

*Recommendation Five: Implement a Cross-Functional Team*

It is recommended that TPS implement a cross-functional team comprised of the most effective leaders within the organization with a goal of collaborative and continuous organizational improvement. Continuous improvement teams are comprised of both civilian and police employees who are competent and caring leaders, regardless of rank. They represent the different sections and functions within the organization. The team provides a forum for employees to make collaborative decisions and recommendations to management that can contribute to the success of the organization. A continuous

improvement team will enable the TPS to leverage the talents and expertise of their best and brightest to make informed and sustainable organizational improvements.

The concept of collaborative and continuous improvement in an organization is not new. For example, for many years, Toyota has embraced the philosophy of Kaizen, and more recently, the Toyota Lean program, which is based on a Japanese philosophy that focuses on continuous improvement. Keller (2008) stated, "It's the steady continuous improvement Kaizens, which will yield lasting performance increases that will stick. Like the tortoise and the hare, it's the slow, steady and continuous pursuit of excellence that wins the competitive race" (¶ 1).

A continuous improvement team will address, in some form, all of the organizational and leadership practices that the data from this research have shown are important to the engagement of TPS employees. For example, by its very nature, a continuous improvement team is a model of an organization-wide collaborative work environment. Because of this, team members can be provided growth and development opportunities through various initiatives and assigned tasks, problem-solving and relationship skills are developed, and goals and objectives are more quickly achieved, bringing clarity, focus, and an increased implementation rate of the organization's strategic plan (GVTPS, 2007a).

Implementing a continuous improvement team will enable the TPS to have a broader representation of the system collaboratively working on organizational improvements at one time. According to Weisbord (2004),

Companies get better when employees cooperate on joint tasks. When people meet across levels and lines of status, function, gender, race, and hierarchy, when problems are seen as systemic rather than discrete, wonderful (and unpredictable)



things happen. Long standing lockups, assumed to be intractable, are resolved. Relationships improve, walls come down, problems are solved... Such happenings lead to more creative and committed actions, more secure and engaging work. (p. 342)

A continuous improvement team is a cross-functional group coming together to work on a series of projects and initiatives in support of the entire system, rather than working in seclusion on their own part of the system.

As described to this point, there are many tangible benefits of a continuous improvement team. However, developing an effective team that is equipped with the right skills requires some expertise. As such, I would recommend that the TPS engage the services of a competent consultant/facilitator who possesses the necessary skills to provide direction in the development of the team. Further, this professional should be able to provide the team members with the leadership and problem-solving skills required to ensure their success and should have a track record of having successfully implemented these types of continuous improvement initiatives in other agencies.

*Recommendation Six: Senior Leaders Need to Communicate a Message that They are Sincerely Interested in Every Employee's Well Being*

Senior management's sincere interest in their employees' well-being was chosen as the top engagement driver by civilians and number two by police officers. This is the final and shortest recommendation. By initiating any of the first five recommendations, senior leaders will signal a strong message that they value their employees, rely on their collaborative input, are concerned about their growth, and are sincerely interested in their well being.

### Organizational Implications

Throughout this research, it has become evident that the TPS is an organization that has a commitment to continuously expand on the concept of a partnership between employer and employees. As Izzo and Withers (2007) stated,

True business leaders lead from within a group, listening to different points of view and integrating different ideas into workable solutions.... We call this partnering. Since partnering is precisely what today's workers are cut out for and what they hotly desire, it's a concept that—applied with commitment—works like none other. (p. 179)

By the very nature of this type of research, the employee's sense of partnership with the employer is further strengthened.

The six actionable recommendations that flow from this research are not complicated and would likely have been implemented in some form during the natural progression and growth of this young organization. The recommendations are an expression of what the employees have validated as being important to them in fostering their engagement. The purpose of the recommendations is to create organizational change that should have a positive effect on fostering employee engagement. As my literature review suggests, the quality of organizational outcomes and employee retention are inextricably linked to employee engagement.

The TPS has a senior leadership team in place that is on a course of continuous organizational improvement. There appears to be a momentum within this organization that is fuelled by the quality of its employees. As the survey indicated, 100% of the employees care about the future of this organization, and 96% are committed to seeing the organization succeed (see Table 6). The research has shown there are some strong positives, as well as areas requiring attention in this organization. The recommendations

are meant to further capitalize on the strong positives and improve those areas requiring attention. In the event the recommendations from this research project are not implemented, there will be a missed opportunity to build on the existing momentum. Further, it is unlikely improvement will naturally occur due to the disparity between police and civilian engagement levels, and in fact, this disparity may increase due to inaction.

#### Implications for Future Research

Civilian and sworn police officers are two distinct groups within a police organization. The findings from this study have led to a potential research project that would investigate how being a civilian employee in a culture dominated by police officers affects their engagement levels. As a rule, the person in charge of a police organization is de facto a police officer. Further, the majority of the decision makers at most levels are police officers. Certainly, there are civilian supervisors at every level of a police organization, but they also ultimately end up reporting to a police officer who is either a mid-level manager or an executive officer. To what degree does this affect the engagement levels of civilian employees? Is there a better way to manage and lead civilian employees within a police organization?

Another potential research project, on which I intend on following up, is the impact a field trainer has on the long-term commitment levels of a new recruit. How does the quality of that training directly affect the engagement level and retention rate of new officers in the short- and long-term?

### Summary

A review of the literature has identified a correlation between employee engagement and retention. Central to developing an engaged workforce are the values, beliefs, and expectations of the TPS employees. As such, extensive research was conducted and key themes were identified that might foster employee engagement within this organization. Hopefully, the six recommendations developed for the sponsor will provide some direction on its journey to developing a fully engaged workforce.

## CHAPTER SIX: LESSONS LEARNED

### The Right Project Sponsor

I had originally begun this masters program with the intent of completing the research project within my own organization. From the start of enrolling in the Royal Roads University Leadership Program, I had full support from the Chief Constable of my department. This support continued up to the proposal stage of the project, when my department went through a senior management change and a new Chief Constable was appointed. The new Chief Constable placed some restrictions on the research that I felt were unworkable. I came to a juncture where I needed to make a decision to continue with the research in my department or look elsewhere for an opportunity that would enable a fuller learning experience. With the help of my project faculty supervisor, I was able to connect with a new sponsor who fully supported my proposal. Although the extra work and the required extension was a burden, the net learning experience was well worth the decision to move on to a sponsor who was engaged in the project and understood the value of listening to the people in his organization. I learned the value of not being stuck on any one course of action.

### Choosing a Project that has a Practical Application

MacKeracher (2004) spoke of different motivators in learning, one of which is to learn for the practical reason of growth. She stated, "Growth needs relate to such personal goals as improving job skills, getting a salary increase, developing professionally ... and so on" (p. 132).

From the start of this program, I have developed knowledge that has practical applications in my organization. As such, I have had the continuous opportunity to apply

my learning within my work and build on my skills through experiential learning cycles. The research project I chose directly relates to changes currently underway in my organization. This has been a motivator that has kept me keenly interested in the content of my research from beginning to end. I have learned that to receive the fullest experience from your research, you should work on something that has real meaning for you.

#### Clearly Wording Survey Questions

The disadvantage of an electronic survey was the lack of opportunity for me to clear up ambiguities or misunderstandings in the questions. In order to mitigate the chances of the forgoing, I composed the survey questions with the input of my action research team to ensure that the clarity and intent of each question elicited the data sought. One of my survey questions asked the participants to rank, from one to five, the engagement drivers they felt were most important. I received four email requests for clarity, as there were a total of ten engagement drivers to choose from. Although the question seemed clear to my action research team, in hindsight they had a fuller description of the question when I presented it to them in person. I learned that I should have pilot tested my survey not only with my action research team, but also with persons completely uninvolved with my project.

#### Completing the Literature Review in Advance

I completed my literature review in advance of conducting the interviews. I found this to be advantageous for two reasons. First, as the interviews progressed, I could directly link the content of the interviews and what people were telling me to what I had learned through my literature review. Second, and most importantly, the effect of recognizing that the research I had done was on target and held a practical value provided

a personal sense of accomplishment that built a greater level of confidence in my abilities.

### Summary

The primary lesson learned from this study is that there are very many smart and genuinely caring people employed at TPS. I was amazed at the insights provided. They spoke from their hearts and were able to objectively see each side of an issue. Most impressive was their genuine interest in the well-being of their fellow employees. This organization has the capacity to succeed at anything their collective will sets out to accomplish. Most importantly, I have learned that the same capacity exists within my own organization, and through teamwork, we also have the ability to succeed at anything we set out to accomplish.

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APPENDIX A: INVITATION TO PARTICIPATE IN INTERVIEWS

**Invitation to Participate  
South Coast British Columbia Transportation Authority Police Engagement and  
Retention Research Project**

You are being invited to participate in an interview. The intent of the interview is to determine what you believe are key leadership competencies that are supportive of an engaged workforce and integral to accomplishing the goals of your organization. The expected duration of the interview will be 1 hour.

The results of this interview will help inform an organization wide survey that will benchmark the organization's performance in critical best practice arenas. The results of this survey may help in developing a plan for improvement in identified areas.

The research is being conducted by Shane Barber and makes up part of his requirements to complete a Master's Degree through Royal Roads University. The researcher is being supervised by Terry D. Anderson, PhD. (xxx) xxx-xxxx

The interviews will be conducted by Shane Barber. Please respond to Inspector Bob Huston by January 5, 2009, indicating if you wish to participate. The participants will be chosen based on a fair representation of gender and seniority. Once all potential participants have been identified, a date and location will be set that best meets your schedule.

Any questions will be answered prior to beginning the interview. You will be provided, at your request, the name and telephone number of a person who can verify the authenticity of this research project.

Thanks in advance for your participation.

Shane Barber  
Ph: (xxx) xxx-xxxx  
shanebarber@xxxxxx.xx

APPENDIX B: INVITATION TO PARTICIPATE IN ONLINE SURVEY

**From:** Clapham, Ward  
**Sent:** Wednesday, February 25, 2009 3:16 PM  
**To:** GVTAPS Staff  
**Cc:** 'Shane Barber'

**Subject:** I Need Your Assistance

REQUEST... I need your input to make our Police Service a better place to work. Can you please complete the online survey asap.

As most people are aware, we are continuing the process of gathering your valuable insights into further developing a high-performing organization. Listening to you is paramount in this process.

Recognizing that transforming the vision for our organization into reality is dependent upon your level of engagement in the process; we have undertaken a collaborative and highly participative approach to identify your workplace expectations.

This process began several months back. To date 10% of the department, both sworn and civilian staff, have been interviewed. The information gathered in these interviews helped inform the content of the attached survey.

I encourage everyone to complete this survey as the results can help provide direction in planning and initiatives related to increasing your overall job satisfaction.

Please visit the following link to complete the survey:  
[http://www.surveymonkey.com/s.aspx?sm=am7smTo\\_2fWZhlGSrCSMr8tg\\_3d\\_3d](http://www.surveymonkey.com/s.aspx?sm=am7smTo_2fWZhlGSrCSMr8tg_3d_3d)

Ward Clapham,  
Chief Officer  
S.C.B.C.T.A. Police Service

## APPENDIX C: SURVEY CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE FORM

### Survey Invitation

The purpose of this completely anonymous, confidential survey is to solicit your insights providing your organization with valuable information that can help provide direction in planning and initiatives related to increasing overall job satisfaction.

This survey was designed for your organization with extensive consultation with both sworn and civilian staff and with oversight from an organization development professional.

The survey will take approximately 20 minutes of your time. You must complete this survey by midnight, March 9, 2009.

**Confidentiality and Security of Information:** In the online report, no one, including you, will be able to identify you, your individual responses or your email address. All data will be downloaded into the West Vancouver Police computer system, securely password protected by Shane Barber, and then deleted from the survey company's online system. This data will be deleted from the West Vancouver Police computer system at the conclusion of the project.

The results will be reviewed by the Research Team and a summary of the results will be presented to you at the completion of the research project.

**Instructions:** For each of the statements below, please indicate the extent of your agreement by checking the rating that best describes your perception of your organization.

Your first-impression rating on each survey item is probably the most accurate, and completing the survey in this manner will save you time.

Thank you for contributing to the gathering of this valuable information. It can be useful in preparing for strategic planning, organizational change and continuous improvement.

This survey will provide data that will be utilized by Shane Barber to complete the requirements of a Master's Degree being completed at Royal Roads University. Your completion and submission of this survey will be considered as your consent to utilize the data for this research project. If you have any questions as to the authenticity of this survey, you may contact: P. Gerry Nixon, Program Head MA in Leadership Program/ School of Leadership Studies

(xxx) xxx-xxxx

The software utilized in this survey is a U.S product operated out of the United States. It is therefore subject to the Patriot Act meaning the American government has the right to monitor information that is identified as a threat to their national security.

APPENDIX D: INVITATION TO PARTICIPATE IN A FOCUS GROUP

**From:** Shane Barber [mailto:ShaneBarber@wvpd.ca]  
**Sent:** Sunday, March 22, 2009 8:00 PM  
**To:** Nielsen, Beth  
**Subject:** Focus Group

For the meeting on the 24<sup>th</sup>, here is what I would like to accomplish. Please provide the participants with the following information:

**Purpose of Project**

To identify how existing leadership practices and how might new leadership practices foster employee engagement and retention?

**Interviews (19 participants)**

There were four overarching themes identified during the interview stage of this project. The themes are all related to employee engagement and include: (1) the importance of challenging work; (2) the importance of growth and development; (3) the importance of accountability; and (4) the importance of communication from senior leadership. These themes were used to develop the content of the organization wide.

**Survey (140 participants)**

Included in the survey was a question that requested employees rank order common engagement drivers to provide insight into what people feel are the most important factors affecting their engagement?

The top five drivers of engagement were the same in each category of civilian, police and the entire organization. These common drivers are also similar to the themes developed during the interview stage of this project.

Today, I am asking your help to identify areas where the organization is currently doing well and areas where there is room for improvement within the top six engagement drivers. From this discussion, I would like to include any recommendations you might have with my final set of recommendations to your senior leadership team.

I will provide prepared flip charts with each driver and a place for comments. Once each group has had a chance to add their comments to each chart, I will ask them to develop recommendations that will be passed on to Ward and his team.

Staff Sergeant Shane Barber  
Planning and Research  
Phone: (xxx) xxx-xxxx  
Fax: (xxx) xxx-xxxx  
E-Mail ShaneBarber@xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx.xx

APPENDIX E: INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

1. Tell me about the best times you have had with your organization?
2. Tell me about a time you felt most involved in your work and organization?
3. What are the things you value deeply about yourself and your work?
4. What three things do wish for this organization that would make this a place where you want to stay and feel inspired to do your best work?

Not every question was asked of each participant depending on the flow of the interview. There was no specific order to the questions other than always asking question number four last.



APPENDIX F: INTERVIEW CONSENT FORM

**Employee Retention and Engagement**

You are being invited to participate in an interview. The intent is to determine what you believe are key leadership competencies that are supportive of an engaged workforce and integral to accomplishing the goals of this organization. The expected duration of the focus group will be approximately 1 hrs.

The results of this interview will help inform an organization wide survey that will benchmark the organizations performance in the critical best practice arenas. The results of this survey can help develop a plan for improvement in identified areas.

The research is being conducted by Shane Barber and makes up part of his requirements to complete a Master's Degree through Royal Roads University. The researcher is being supervised by Terry D. Anderson, PhD. (xxx xxx-xxxx). If you have any questions as to the authenticity of this survey, you may contact: P. Gerry Nixon, Program Head MA in Leadership Program/ School of Leadership Studies (xxx) xxx-xxxx

The interview will be audio recorded. Participants in this interview have the right to refuse to participate and withdraw at any time without prejudice. You have the right to refrain from answering any question. You have the right to remove any information you have already provided.

Shane Barber will answer any questions prior to beginning the interview. Further, he will provide the name and telephone number of a person who can verify the authenticity of the research project.

The research results will be made available to any interested participant once the entire research project is completed. This includes publishing the results of the organization wide survey through the department email.

No participant names will appear on any documentation. Any data collected will remain confidential and held in a locked cabinet. Only Shane Barber will have access to the raw data. All data including audio tapes will be destroyed one year after the completion of this research project.

This consent form will be held in a sealed envelope for one year and destroyed with the collected data.

Signature acknowledging consent to participate: \_\_\_\_\_

Dated: \_\_\_\_\_

APPENDIX G: THEMES DEVELOPED FROM INTERVIEWS

1. A need for challenging work
2. A greater need for accountability:
  - Supervisors/Middle Management being held accountable for their performance in terms of competency and engagement in their duties
  - Work units and individuals clearly understand their roles as they relate to the organization's goals and objectives
3. Growth and Development opportunities including advancement
4. A clear sense of direction from senior management
  - Communication is open, honest, and transparent/more is better

APPENDIX I: ONLINE SURVEY

Instructions: For each of the statements below, please indicate the extent of your agreement by checking the rating that best describes your perception of your organization. (5-point Likert Scale: Strongly Agree to Strongly Disagree)

Your first-impression rating on each survey item is probably the most accurate, and completing the survey in this manner will save you time.

1. I care about the future of my organization.
2. I am doing something I consider satisfying and worthwhile in my job.
3. My job is challenging and interesting.
4. I am proud to be a part of this organization.
5. I am confident the organization is preparing itself for future challenges.
6. I am treated with dignity and respect.
7. I am involved with decisions that affect my work.
8. The work I do is very important to the success of the organization.
9. I am given an opportunity to present and try new ideas.
10. I am satisfied with my opportunity for growth and development.
11. I believe my career aspirations can be achieved in this organization.
12. I am satisfied with the level of balance between my work and personal life.
13. I am committed to seeing this organization succeed.
14. I have a clear picture of the direction in which the organization is heading.
15. I understand how my role relates to the organization's goals and objectives.
16. I understand how my unit contributes to the organization's success.
17. I have the resources to do my job.
18. I have the training I need to do my job.

19. Senior management has a sincere interest in employees' well being.
20. Organization provides challenging work.
21. Organization cares a great deal about the community we serve.
22. Organization provides career advancement opportunities.
23. Employees have resources needed to perform jobs in high-quality way.
24. Employees are provided appropriate growth and development opportunities.
25. Organization promotes a collaborative work environment.
26. Employees have appropriate decision-making input.
27. Employees have a clear understanding of the organization's goals and objectives.
28. Senior management communicates a clear vision for long-term success.
29. Recognizing what people value most in their work experience is based on their own perspective and values, please provide your top 5 rankings, in order of importance, of the following statements.
30. My supervisor is fair in dealing with people.
31. My supervisor ensures that people who do a good job are recognized and appreciated.
32. My supervisor ensures that I am adequately informed about matters affecting me.
33. My supervisor gives me adequate feedback on the work that I do.
34. My supervisor takes a supportive role in my professional growth and development.
35. I would feel comfortable going to my supervisor with a concern.
36. My supervisor helps me overcome barriers to getting the job done.
37. My supervisor sets clear goals and objectives that are linked to the goals and objectives of the organization.
38. It is clear to me how my supervisor will evaluate my performance.

39. My supervisor sets work objectives that motivate people.
40. My supervisor makes decisions promptly when needed.
41. My supervisor communicates clearly and openly.
42. My supervisor is open to and supportive of innovative ways to accomplish the goals and objectives of the organization.
43. My supervisor holds people accountable for their performance.
44. My supervisor recognizes and rewards initiative and innovation.
45. Senior management is taking steps to ensure the organization's long-term success.
46. Senior management supports new ideas and innovative ways of doing things.
47. Senior management communicates openly and honestly.
48. Senior management clearly communicates the immediate and long-term goals of the organization.
49. Senior management holds employees accountable at all levels in accomplishing the immediate and long-term goals of the organization.
50. Please feel free to provide any additional information that was not sufficiently covered in this survey.
51. Recognizing there is no "one size fits all" answer to creating a fulfilling work environment. The following demographics will help in providing a more informed report that includes a variety of valuable perspectives.

APPENDIX I: FOCUS GROUP QUESTIONS

**Employee Engagement and Retention**

You are being invited to participate in a focus group. The intent is to determine what you believe are key leadership competencies that are supportive of an engaged workforce and integral to accomplishing the goals of this organization. The expected duration of the focus group will be approximately 2 hrs.

The results of this focus group will help inform the final recommendations I will be forwarding to Chief Officer Clapham.

The research is being conducted by Shane Barber and makes up part of his requirements to complete a Master's Degree through Royal Roads University. The researcher is being supervised by Terry D. Anderson, PhD (xxx xxx-xxxx). If you have any questions as to the authenticity of this survey, you may contact: P. Gerry Nixon, Program Head MA in Leadership Program/ School of Leadership Studies (xxx) xxx-xxxx

Participants in this focus group have the right to refuse to participate and withdraw at any time without prejudice. You have the right to refrain from answering any question. You have the right to remove any information you have already provided. However, this does not pertain to content that was developed and built upon prior to your withdrawal or removal of any information. If you choose to withdraw or remove information, speak to Shane Barber at the conclusion of the focus group. Your input, as described above, will be vetted and destroyed immediately after.

Shane Barber will answer any questions prior to beginning the focus group. The research results will be made available to any interested participant once the entire research project is completed.

No participant names will appear on any documentation. Any data collected will remain confidential and held in a locked cabinet. Only Shane Barber will have access to the raw data. All data will be destroyed one year after the completion of this research project.

This consent form will be held in a sealed envelope for one year and destroyed with the collected data.

Signature acknowledging consent to participate: \_\_\_\_\_

Dated: March 24, 2009

APPENDIX J: SUMMARY OF SURVEY RESULTS (TO BE USED IN FOCUS  
GROUP DISCUSSION)

Statement	Organization Rank Order	Police	Civilian
Resources to get the job done	1	1	5
Senior management's interest in employees well being	2	2	1
Growth and development opportunities	3	3	3
Challenging work	4	4	2
Collaborative work environment	5	5	4
Clearly defined organizational goals and objectives	6	6	8
Career advancement opportunities	7	7	7
Appropriate decision-making input	8	9	6
Senior management communicates clear vision for long-term success	9	8	9
Organization cares about the community we serve	10	10	10