



Improving Los Angeles Police Department Recruiting

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The Los Angeles Police Department (LAPD) is in the middle of a five-year campaign to increase its number of sworn officers by 1,000 and achieve a force strength of more than 10,000 officers for the first time in its history. It is also operating under consent decrees to achieve greater diversity in its hiring of officers. Working with the city personnel department’s Public Safety Bureau, the LAPD is making progress toward these goals. In early 2009, the city’s mayor and police chief announced that the LAPD had 9,895 officers, a new record for the department.

The decreasing demand for labor in the local economy is likely to increase the number of applicants. Therefore, the most pressing challenge for the department may become determining how to efficiently identify the most-promising candidates from a large number of applicants.

To help the city meet these challenges, the Ralph M. Parsons Foundation asked the RAND Corporation to assist the LAPD in achieving its recruiting and diversity goals by finding ways to improve productivity and efficiency in the recruiting process. RAND researchers identified potential untapped markets, created a model of viable candidates that the LAPD and the personnel department could use to target recruitment and prioritize applicants, and recommended ways to improve productivity of the recruiting and hiring process, particularly in teamwork between personnel analysts and background investigators.

Improving Recruiting

In addition to hosting special recruiting expos, the LAPD recruits at a wide variety of venues. RAND researchers analyzed the productivity of these events and developed methods to identify untapped labor markets.

The researchers found that LAPD recruiting expos are the most fruitful and efficient events for attracting qualified candidates who are eventually hired. Campus recruiting, contrary to popular

Abstract

The Los Angeles Police Department is seeking to increase its force to more than 10,000 officers. RAND researchers devised strategies for the city to improve recruiting and increase the efficiency of the hiring process. Among other initiatives, the researchers suggested recruiting in relatively underexploited areas, tailoring efforts to specific groups the department wishes to recruit, prioritizing candidates with certain characteristics linked to successful applicants, and increasing teamwork between background investigators and personnel analysts.

perception, appears to be as effective as military recruiting, where the LAPD faces competition from other law-enforcement agencies. Sporting events appear to be less effective in attracting candidates than are job fairs, where attendees may have paid a registration fee and may be more inclined to consider career choices. Nevertheless, sporting events may offer a means for the LAPD to make a favorable impression on potential law-enforcement recruits, which may prove pivotal when they consider career choices.

Current LAPD recruiting efforts focus largely on the city of Los Angeles. The RAND analysis identified areas near city limits that merit more attention from recruiters. These untapped labor markets, which have been the site of few, if any, recruiting events, include a region along the 710 freeway in the vicinity of South Gate, another in the eastern San Gabriel Valley that includes Baldwin Park, and North Long Beach.

The researchers recommended that the LAPD customize its marketing efforts to improve diversity among its recruits. For example, Asian and Pacific Islander candidates report greater exposure to television ads that air exclusively on an Asian-language station. Female and black candidates report greater exposure to recruiting

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Headquarters Campus
1776 Main Street
P.O. Box 2138
Santa Monica, California
90407-2138
TEL 310.393.0411
FAX 310.393.4818

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events than do white and Hispanic males, the two groups with the highest propensity for joining the LAPD. This suggests that recruiting events are a relatively cost-effective way to recruit black candidates and women.

To better tailor the LAPD's marketing efforts, the researchers also suggested revising its marketing surveys. In addition to eliminating unnecessary discrepancies between its online and application surveys, such as those on race and ethnicity categories, the department may wish to use the online survey to assess its Internet-driven marketing strategy and the application survey to assess which information or advertising sources were most influential in the decision to apply to the LAPD.

Prioritizing Recruits

RAND researchers recommended that the LAPD enhance its capability to quickly identify the most promising applicants at earlier stages of the recruiting process. This capability will conserve increasingly scarce resources and improve productivity. RAND researchers developed statistical models that identify key applicant characteristics associated with successful completion of the recruiting process. Using these models, the researchers developed a system of priority scores to effectively triage the incoming candidates. The initial scoring system gives the highest priority to candidates from Los Angeles County with a bachelor's or higher degree and a clean preliminary background application. LAPD recruiters, personnel analysts, and background investigators could use the priority scores to manage workflow, giving more attention to candidates with higher scores.

RAND researchers also demonstrated how the LAPD can balance productivity and diversity of recruits by adjusting priority scores to meet its recruiting goals. For instance, with mandates to increase the representation of women, Asians, or blacks in the department, the city might add priority points to potential recruits from these groups.

Increasing Teamwork

RAND researchers found that the city personnel department can harness additional productivity and efficiency in its recruiting processes by integrating background investigators and personnel analysts into collocated investigation teams

with monthly production targets and a single database to track cases. Effective evaluation of an applicant requires a comprehensive examination of his or her complete life history. The researchers recommended that the city personnel department provide on-the-job training to improve consistency in how the evaluation is done. The most-productive background investigators and experienced personnel analysts should lead workshops to describe how they approach key aspects of the investigation process.

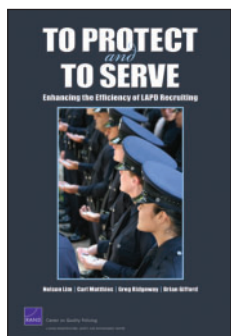
Top performers among background investigators and personnel analysts should be recognized in other ways for their contributions. Such recognition should be public, meaningful, and frequent enough for the workforce to be reminded of its achievements. An annual celebration of achievements, for example, might include public figures, such as the mayor of Los Angeles or the chief of police, whom staff would feel privileged to meet.

Evaluating Reforms

The LAPD has already implemented some of the recommendations of the RAND researchers. For example, the personnel department and the LAPD have computed priority scores for a cohort of applicants and started using these scores to prioritize applicants.

The LAPD and the city personnel department will need to evaluate the effectiveness of whatever reforms it implements. Such evaluation may include calibrating the priority scores with the experience of background investigators who are using the scores and may identify new variables, such as military experience (a variable that had not been recorded in administrative data), to help improve the scores. The agencies may also create different scores as information accumulates on the candidates at different stages of the recruiting process, such as one score for recruiters and mentors and another for background investigators.

Finally, the city may wish to reconsider its allocation of recruiting resources as labor-market conditions change. For example, in poor labor-market conditions, the city may not need the same level of marketing and recruiting resources as in better economic times but may need additional background investigators and personnel analysts to process more applicants. ■



This research brief describes work done for the RAND Center on Quality Policing documented in *To Protect and to Serve: Enhancing the Efficiency of LAPD Recruiting*, by Nelson Lim, Carl Matthies, Greg Ridgeway, and Brian Gifford, MG-881-RMPF (available at <http://www.rand.org/pubs/monographs/MG881/>), 2009, 140 pp., \$38.00, ISBN: 978-0-8330-4718-2. The RAND Corporation is a nonprofit research organization providing objective analysis and effective solutions that address the challenges facing the public and private sectors around the world. RAND's publications do not necessarily reflect the opinions of its research clients and sponsors. RAND® is a registered trademark.

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