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The Business Police Academy Commercial Loss Prevention Through Education

By GIANT ABUTALEBI ARYANI,
CARL L. ALSABROOK, and
TERRY D. GARRETT

During the past two decades, many law enforcement agencies successfully have implemented citizen police academies (CPAs) for the mutual benefit of their departments and the communities they serve. Building on this success, another innovative community policing program, the business police academy (BPA), has emerged. BPAs' benefits to law enforcement agencies and business communities clearly outweigh the costs of their implementation and operation. Although information on how to implement and operate a BPA is not as readily available as material on a CPA, the concepts are similar. Agencies can apply the experience and lessons learned from CPAs to BPAs in their communities.



CONCEPT

The BPA, a cooperative educational effort teaming law enforcement and the business community, represents a different version of a CPA. A BPA strives to ensure a productive exchange of information between businesses and law enforcement, which leads to an increased awareness of potential criminal activity and, as a result, to a reduction in crimes against businesses.¹

The implementation of a BPA follows the same steps as beginning a CPA.² Nonetheless, the BPA differs in three major areas: the targeted audience, the curriculum, and the instructors.

Audience

The targeted audience for a BPA is the business community within the respective jurisdiction. Unlike the CPA, where students ideally represent a cross section of

the community, the BPA only includes students who are members of the business arena, such as owners, managers, and employees. It encompasses all commercial enterprises, such as retail stores, banks, restaurants, garages, and office complexes.

BPA students should live or work within the particular jurisdiction, be at least 21 years of age, and maintain a good standing in the community. Agencies should disqualify applicants with prior felony convictions. They should select students from various types of businesses for the first BPA class, which will ensure maximum publicity and help in future BPA recruitment as well. Agencies should accommodate business needs, such as location and schedule of classes and, at the end of the academy, hold a graduation ceremony for graduates' families, agency administrators, city or

county officials, representatives from the local chamber of commerce, and officials from volunteer organizations. Agencies should encourage graduates to display their graduation certificates at their places of business to promote publicity for the BPA.³ A positive educational experience for business representatives benefits both the agency and the business community.

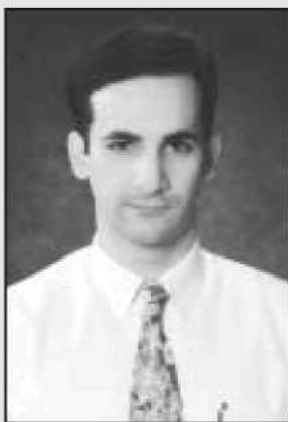
Curriculum

A CPA provides students with a basic overview of diverse law enforcement topics.⁴ On the other hand, a BPA seeks to reduce crimes against businesses; therefore, the curriculum should cover, in-depth, topics specific to the business community.⁵ Crimes covered include those commonly committed against businesses, as well as related information for understanding and responding to them.

Lectures should include demonstrations, facility tours, role-plays, and simulations, when appropriate. Videos, slides, audio cassettes, overheads, and posters serve as additional tools to aid in the learning experience. Instructors should relay first-hand experiences and allow enough time for questions, which sustains the cooperative atmosphere. They should stress the cost of the respective types of crimes against businesses and how to alleviate it. This emphasis serves the business community's interest of reducing the cost of running a business, and it keeps the audience attentive.

Instructors

A BPA requires a program coordinator with program management tasks similar to a CPA's. However, the majority of CPA instructors work for the hosting police department and introduce their



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Typical Curriculum of a 12-Week Business Police Academy

I. Administration and the Cost of Crime

- Introduction and welcome from the chief
- Administrative information and department overview
- Overview of business structure in the community
- Crime statistics and reporting
- The economics of crime

II. Agency Operations and the Legal Process

- Patrol procedures
- Communications
- Criminal investigations
- Crime scene preservation
- Criminal justice system
- Corrections

III. Property Crime

- Shoplifting and employee theft
- Scams and con games
- Credit card fraud
- Forgery and check fraud
- Embezzlement
- Identity theft
- Counterfeiting
- Business burglary
- Fencing

IV. Violent Crime

- Business robbery
- Bank robbery
- Kidnapping and hostage survival
- Extortion

V. Loss Prevention

- Suspicious persons and situations
- Business crime watch
- Crime Stoppers
- Citizens on patrol and other volunteer programs
- Security assessment
- Selection of private security

VI. Special Topics

- Licensing and permits
- Bribery
- Organized crime
- Federal and state criminal justice system and agencies
- Emergency medical services
- Special weapons and tactics
- False alarm reduction
- Personal safety, self-defense, and citizen's powers of arrest

of the peace or small claims court judge to acquaint the audience with such legal issues as the processes of prosecution and restitution.

Representatives of major retail stores with successful results on pursuing shoplifting and decreasing employee theft also can teach these subjects. Additionally, employees from the Secret Service can teach students about counterfeiting, and the FBI can instruct on bank robbery and kidnapping. Officers from nearby major law enforcement agencies with specialized units for a variety of crime categories can educate the audience on topics, such as embezzlement, identity theft, fencing, extortion, and organized crime. Employees from other federal and state agencies, as well as specially trained citizen volunteers, can augment the available resource pool of instructors.

COSTS

The costs of a BPA to the coordinating agency are minimal. The agency charges academy students tuition and application fees, which typically range from \$20 to \$100 per student. These funds should cover material expenses, such as binders, copies, handouts, and T-shirts. The agency covers any additional material cost. However, the local chamber of commerce or a business, such as a major retail store, may serve as a sponsor and help alleviate some of these costs. Labor represents the bulk of the costs incurred by the agency. Department officials can decide whether to pay their officers overtime or grant compensatory time for assuming teaching duties. Instructors from the chamber of

students to that agency's officers.⁶ This may not prove the same with a BPA, especially with small and midsize agencies. The nature and depth of the covered classes require agencies to recruit expert individuals outside of the department to maintain the quality of lectures and to help the academy achieve its goal. For example, officials of the

local chamber of commerce can deliver the overview of the area's business structure. Economic or criminal justice academicians familiar with the jurisdiction may present issues, such as crime statistics and reporting, as well as the economics and cost of crime. Agencies can invite district attorney representatives and the local justice

commerce and business community, academicians, and citizen volunteers typically donate their time. Officers and representatives from other departments either volunteer their time or receive compensatory time from their respective agencies. The use of city or county newsletters and official agency press releases can minimize the cost of promotional advertisement. Additionally, word of mouth is an effective and inexpensive advertising tool. Although unlikely, potential liability costs from accidents exist despite signed liability waivers. Thorough instruction before equipment demonstrations, role-plays, and simulations decreases these risks.

BENEFITS

Law enforcement accrues both direct and indirect benefits from a BPA. An enormous direct benefit is the reduction of the workload of an agency's investigators. Many investigators can recount their frustrations over business owners or managers unwilling to aid in criminal investigations. Business representatives often cite fears of potential civil liabilities, as well as a lack of knowledge about the process and length of the criminal prosecution. For example, one store manager of a nationwide retail store in a wealthy suburban community admitted that checking for identification of customers who pay with checks or credit cards is too time consuming, especially at the peak of the Christmas holiday shopping season. This manager openly hypothesized to investigators that profits would compensate for losses even if his store suffered \$100,000 in losses per month due to fraud

because the store would make about \$1,000,000 in profits per month. This attitude is counterproductive; it causes some businesses to deny problems and to let criminal incidences go unreported. The BPA helps to reverse this attitude and reduce investigation time as cooperation from the business community increases.

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Law enforcement accrues both direct and indirect benefits from a BPA.

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A BPA familiarizes the business community, in-depth, with the different crimes commonly committed against businesses. Students learn how to prepare for, detect, act, react, and prevent crimes against businesses. They learn the importance of pursuing crimes committed against them and their businesses and not to simply accept their losses or rely on their insurance coverage. Instructors from the local prosecutor's office address students' fears about potential civil liabilities, which include filing a complaint to the actual prosecution and, in the best case scenario, to the conviction, sentencing, and restitution phase.

Further, implementing the advice and practices learned at the BPA reduces the likelihood of businesses being victimized; increases the probability that business owners, managers, and staff members

will survive violent incidents; and increases the probability of arresting offenders. In the long run, these factors lower rates of crime against businesses. But, in the short term, the greater number of reports and apprehensions will lead to a statistically higher rate of crime against businesses. However, many crimes against businesses, such as check and credit card fraud, business burglary, and counterfeiting, are committed by serial criminals. Their apprehension and prosecution will significantly decrease the number of such crimes in the community and further lower the crime rate in the long run. Moreover, the short-run statistical increase in crime against businesses gives the agency a more accurate picture of crime incidences. Departments can develop appropriate strategies and allocate resources needed to fight crime, which leads to a decrease in the rate of crime against businesses.

Indirectly, the agency benefits from enhanced ties to the business community, which results in a safer business climate or, at least, the perception of one. The agency's reputation in the business community increases, which potentially can lead to tangible business support of various agency initiatives and programs. Business assistance may include sponsorships for different agency volunteer programs. Other examples include business support for agency resource requirements and bond issues.

CONCLUSION

Business police academies bring the business community and police agency together. The academy's educational environment

gives law enforcement personnel an ideal opportunity to communicate with members of local businesses. Agencies carefully should select their target audience, provide a curriculum that covers topics specific to members of the business community, and choose instructors from individuals outside of their departments to ensure that the BPA accomplishes its goal. Additionally, the costs of implementing and operating a BPA are minimal compared with its direct, as well as indirect, benefits.

The BPA provides law enforcement with an opportunity to teach

and convince business owners, managers, and staff about the multitude of mutual rewards that both sides will derive from greater cooperation in fighting crimes against businesses. In the end, the reduced crime rate proves beneficial to the whole community. •••

Endnotes

¹ See Dave Hurdle, Bunbury District Police, Western Australia, "Business Police Academy," retrieved on July 25, 2002, from <http://www.ezefind.com.au/Police%20Business%20Academy.htm>.

² For more information on CPAs, as well as their implementation, see Ronald E. Ferguson, "The Citizen Police Academy," *FBI Law*

Enforcement Bulletin, September 1985, 5-7; Martin Alan Greenburg, "Citizen Police Academies," *FBI Law Enforcement Bulletin*, August 1991, 10-13; Giant Abutalebi Aryani, Terry D. Garrett, and Carl L. Alsabrook, "The Citizen Police Academy: Success Through Community Partnerships," *FBI Law Enforcement Bulletin*, May 2000, 16-21; and Elizabeth M. Bonello and Joseph A. Schafer, "Citizen Police Academies: Do They Do More Than Entertain?" *FBI Law Enforcement Bulletin*, November 2002, 19-23.

³ Supra note 1.

⁴ Supra note 2 (Aryani, Garrett, and Alsabrook).

⁵ Ocala, Florida, Police Department, retrieved on July 25, 2002, from *Business Police Academy*, http://www.ocalapd.com/opd_programs.html.

⁶ Supra note 2 (Aryani, Garrett, and Alsabrook).