

**THE POLICE
HOW-TO
GUIDES**

**HOW TO GET ALONG
IN A DEPARTMENT**

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HOW TO GET ALONG IN A DEPARTMENT

It's not the ranking officers, but the people who run the place that you need to know

This is agency survival, so pay attention. One thing that's paramount in your success with any agency is learning who the special folks are who make it run.

If you ever visit any department, there will be an executive assistant to the chief or command staff. When I introduce my executive assistant, I tell you to meet Karen, or the lady who runs the place. Some see the levity, but most command staffers know the real truth—it is the countless assistants, secretaries, dispatchers, and other civilian staff who make your life easier.

It is a common rookie mistake to think just because you're now a copper with the uniform and shield, you're special. Don't ever fool yourself; the department's staff is what keeps you rolling.

My mother was a secretary, and I learned one thing from her. Don't forget Professional Assistant's Day (formerly known as Secretary's Day) on the third Wednesday of April. A card for the unit or precinct secretary will put you in their good graces. Always offer a smile and speak the pleasantries of the day to them. They are not paid as much as you and deserve a lot more credit than they receive. There will come a day that you'll need a form or a report and, if you did not forget your manners, you will get the form. Those who forgot are still waiting.

There's always one guy on patrol who never catches the multiple vehicle crash at the end of the shift; why is that? This is the same guy who drops off a dozen hot, fresh donuts or a sack of sliders to the radio room on midnights. It is easier to get along than to swim upstream. Work with those who are your lifeline because, as many dispatchers have told me, "I control your life for the shift." They can and often do.

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What other staffers do you have around you? Do not forget your community service officer who does a lot of the yeomen's duties so you don't have to. Property room managers can make your evidence disappear in the catacombs while you are now late for court. Never forget the Human Resources staff; they control your paycheck and personnel packet. Be kind and courteous with them, as well.

Have a departmental motor pool or mechanic? If you drive an issued police vehicle, buy this guy a coffee! For those who have issued vehicles know how wonderful it is to go in on your day off or midnights for a regular service and oil change. You will discover some get their cars done when it is on duty or best suited to them. Coffee is cheap and sleep is cherished.

Now, time to sound like a chief. If you read your department's mission statement and its core values, they should taut 'teamwork', 'respect' and other synonyms for being kind and getting along with your team. It's not all coppers that make a department; it is a variety of people working together. I've said that a police/sheriff department is much akin to a family. And the sooner you learn how to treat them properly, the better your life will be.