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2019 GUIDE TO **POLICE RECRUITMENT**

How to find and hire the right candidates for your agency

LA Sheriff ties \$142 million in overtime to 1,000 deputy vacancies

Police union says Portland faces 'catastrophic staffing shortages'

Honolulu PD chief: 'It will take years to fill gaps in police staffing'

EDITOR'S NOTE:

The current police recruitment crisis is impacting law enforcement nationwide. Regardless of department size or geographic location, agencies are facing staffing shortages that are leading to excessive overtime costs, and exhausted and demoralized officers.

Many reasons are cited for the shortage of new recruits – from difficult hiring processes to a strong economy and low unemployment. It is evident that police leaders must take a progressive and proactive approach to address the crisis head on.

Just as police departments implement comprehensive crime-prevention strategies, agencies need to develop hiring strategies to increase the likelihood of recruiting and retaining the next generation of police officers. This will require outside-of-the-box thinking to attract non-traditional candidates to supplement dwindling numbers of police applicants.

This eBook details key strategies law enforcement leadership can immediately implement to begin bolstering their ranks.

Ed Flosi outlines why police departments need to start recruiting the next generation of officers early in their teenage-adult development. Christopher Todd discusses why the increased public scrutiny of police departments and their personnel requires agencies to recruit resilient candidates. Althea Olson and Mike Wasilewski list five ways police leaders can recruit and retain millennials, which includes fostering a sense of purpose and creating an environment of advocacy and trust.

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HOW TO PREPARE AMERICA'S NEXT GENERATION OF POLICE OFFICERS

It is important for police departments to start recruiting the next generation of officers early in their teenage-adult development

By Ed Flosi

With the declining interest in a law enforcement career over the past few years and the difficulties of finding qualified candidates who pass a fully vetted background check, agencies nationwide are experiencing problems recruiting police officers.

Law enforcement needs to start taking a closer look at the next generation of potential police officers before they are of an age where they can apply. By the time these hopeful candidates have reached the appropriate age, many will have something in their [background](#) that may preclude them from being hired. At the time of the disqualifying action, the candidate may not have known or fully understood the consequences of their actions. They might be good candidates other for some questionable behavior that might have been prevented if they had known better.

Workshops for next-generation officers

I am part of a group that started an 8-hour “Law Enforcement Candidate Workshop” in conjunction

with West Valley College in Saratoga, California, a few years back. The workshop was designed to help college students in the Administration of Justice Department understand the police application and hiring process.

The workshop included four hours of lecture about the various steps a candidate can expect to face during the process. Students were asked to take an honest look at themselves and their suitability for the law enforcement profession. Students were then sequentially guided through the different specific tests they typically encounter. Students began by learning about the written test and were offered guidance, resources and some sample questions on how to best prepare.

We then reviewed a possible essay-type question, underlining the importance of having basic English skills. The lack of these basic skills is a clear problem with many teenagers. After giving them a practice paragraph to write while it was being read to them, we corrected the paragraph as a group.



Students then learned about the physical agility course they must pass based on state standards. Standardized tests include the 6-foot wall, dummy drag and obstacle course. We discussed each of the various tests and some of the specific tests that area agencies require for employment. These supplemental tests include timed push-ups, sit-ups and a 1.5-mile run.

The oral board process was covered next with some sample questions presented.

After the lecture portion of the workshop, students headed out to the field to see and practice the individual exercises in the physical agility test. The students were then coached and evaluated on each skill.

Honesty and integrity in law enforcement

Concepts of honesty and [integrity](#) are at the core of such a course. Students learn that some things in their background can be forgiven if enough time has passed, but lying about an incident is unacceptable. This is a mistake many potential candidates make.

The background process should be discussed in detail. Prior to the workshop, students completed the California POST Personal History Statement, which is available online. This is merely an exercise to demonstrate the depth of the background investigation potential candidates go through. This became a valuable reference resource for the students as they moved forward with their career in law enforcement. Students also learned about the polygraph exam, psychological exam and medical examination.

Recruiting earlier

Students have reaped the benefits of this workshop. Several of them have been successfully hired and reported that the workshop was extremely helpful in the process. Other students realized that they were not ready and that some had made mistakes that would preclude them from being hired in law enforcement.

It is important for agencies to start recruiting the next generation of officers early in their teenage-adult development. A program for next-generation officers should begin with high school students who have expressed interest in law enforcement. The goal is that by setting expectations early with these students, that immature mistakes can be avoided for those who are truly serious about becoming police officers.

So, the question remains for agencies: how do we attract better prepared, qualified and viable candidates? We believe that setting the goals, objectives and expectations early can be part of the solution. This can be accomplished by getting the information to potential candidates early. Those who want to become part of the profession will hopefully take notice and eventually become great candidates.

About the author

Ed Flosi is a retired police sergeant from San Jose, California. Ed has a unique combination of practical real world experience and academic background. He has worked several assignments including Field Training Program, Training Unit, Narcotics, Special Operations K9 Handler, Research and Development and Custody Facility Supervisor. He has qualified as an expert witness in state and federal courts in police practices/force options and is the principle instructor for PROELIA Defense and Arrest Tactics. He has a Master of Science degree from California State University Long Beach. Ed is a Certified Force Analyst through the Force Science Research Center.



Why police departments need to recruit for resiliency

With the increased public scrutiny of police departments and their personnel, it is more important than ever that agencies recruit resilient candidates

By Christopher Todd

The American Psychological Association [defines resiliency](#) as the process of adapting well in the face of adversity, trauma, tragedy, threats or significant sources of [stress](#) – such as family and relationship problems, serious health problems or [workplace](#) and financial stressors.

As the number and variety of challenges facing law enforcement continue to increase, it has become clear that the law enforcement profession needs

to improve [resiliency](#) among personnel, but are individuals born with resiliency or is it learned?

Research on resiliency

[Emmy Werner](#) conducted a 32-year study of stressors in the lives of 698 children from birth through 30 years old. ^[1] Two-thirds came from stable backgrounds and the other third from at-risk backgrounds. The study revealed that not all of the at-risk children reacted in the same way to stress in their lives. Werner found that there were a few factors that enabled the children to be resilient:



1. Having a bond with a supportive mentor;
2. The child’s psychological response to their environment.

The most notable difference of the at-risk resilient children was that they had what is called a “locus of control.”^[1] These children believed they controlled their own success, not their environment.

The study also revealed that even some of those children who did not possess these traits early on and were initially less resilient, somehow developed them later on and became resilient adults.

These results indicate a person cannot only be born with a higher degree of resiliency, but can also learn resiliency throughout their lifetime. Werner also found that no matter how resilient a person was, at some point, a person’s resiliency could be overwhelmed and, when that happens, the person reaches breaking point.

How we perceive events determines our resiliency

Clinical psychologist George Bonanno has studied resiliency for over 25 years and found it is the person’s perception of a situation that determines how some people are more resilient than others.^[1] Bonanno believes people can either view an event as traumatic or as a learning experience. He uses the term “potential traumatic event” to indicate how a person could respond to a frightening event. A person might find meaning in an event, learn from it and move on, or they would not, thus experiencing trauma. According to Bonanno, it is not the event that traumatizes a person, but how that person perceives the event that determines their response to it.

Training can improve resiliency

University of Pennsylvania psychologist Martin Seligman found that people can be **trained** to view events in a more positive light and with more perceived control.^[1] Once they changed how they



perceived an event, the less prone to depression they became. This is a positive indication that individuals can learn to be more resilient over time. But this also means that the inverse is true: a person can become less resilient over time and, as Werner found, the person can reach a breaking point.

What this means for police officers – who may routinely experience frightening or disturbing events – is that even though some are born with more innate resiliency than others, they can all learn to become more resilient. This also may indicate that no matter what the innate resiliency level an officer has, if they experience enough **stress or trauma**, they may reach their resiliency limit and have a breakdown.

If police officers can be taught to view stressful situations as external events where they may learn and grow internally, they may be better equipped to handle traumatic events. Those officers who are born with a greater degree of resiliency will strengthen what they already have and those who have less innate resiliency will learn to emotionally and mentally armor themselves.

Screening for resiliency

Can police recruiters screen for applicants who may already possess a higher degree of resiliency? Researchers have identified the characteristics of resilient people:

1. High self-esteem

People who have confidence in their own abilities may feel they have more control over situations than those who do not.

2. Optimism

Optimists tend to consider problems as challenges or as growth opportunities and look to the future instead of dwelling on the past.^[2]

3. Flexibility

Resilient people often plan for different outcomes and, if an unexpected outcome does occur, they have the ability to readjust their priorities instead of having their lives come to a halt if their plans do not come to fruition. Flexibility is crucial to policing. Due to the nature of policing, if an officer is inflexible, they may experience higher than normal stress compared to those officers who are flexible.

An example of this became evident in November 2014, when Cleveland police officer Timothy Loehmann shot and killed a 12-year-old boy. This incident could and should have been avoided since Loehman had been rejected during the interview process from numerous police departments. He had also previously been forced to resign from the Independence Police Department in Ohio.^[3] In the recommendation of the Deputy Chief Jim Polak to release Loehman from training, Polak stated that Loehmann was “not mature enough in his accepting of responsibility...”^[3] The licensed psychologist who administered the psychological test and recommended Loehmann be hired, later stated that Loehmann seemed rigid, had strict attitudes and that these characteristics could prove to be a problem in policing.^[3] This inflexibility had disqualified Loehmann from other police departments.

4. Ability to move on

Resilient individuals learn from hard times and move on instead of dwelling on the past.^[2] Those people who blame others and view themselves as victims are less resilient. These individuals may feel that they have no control over their lives and environment, or they may not take responsibility for their own lives. Resilient people accept what has happened, learn from it, and then move on.

Resilient people also tend to have a strong social support network where they can discuss critical incidents that happen in their lives with close friends and family. Individuals without a strong social network tend to internalize and suppress their frustrations.

While these are some of the characteristics of resilient people that police departments could look for in their applicants, most departments only use psychological screening to eliminate mentally undesirable applicants. Screening for resilient character traits could be instituted into the initial interview process. Applicants could be asked how they handle stressful [situations](#) and what coping methods they have found effective in their lives. Questions could include:

- Give an example of a difficult or stressful situation that you went through.
- What enabled or assisted you in getting through that situation? (*Enabled* indicates innate resiliency and *assisted* points to external resources like a social support system, religion, or other mechanisms.)

Resilient and optimistic applicants will be able to articulate what they learned and give examples of how they made it through the situation. They can also be asked about the strength of their family and social support systems. If the answers are too generic, the interviewer can ask questions like:

- Who do you have close relationships with?
- Who do you trust?
- Who trusts you?

If an applicant cannot provide concrete answers, this may indicate a lack of social support and interpersonal skills.

These are only a few examples of questions that can be asked during an initial interview. With the increased public scrutiny of police departments and their personnel, it is more important than ever that agencies recruit resilient candidates.

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About the Author

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5 ways police leaders can recruit and retain millennials



A generational wariness toward long-term employment commitments creates issues of employee retention for the police profession

By Althea R Olson, LCSW, and
Ofc Mike Wasilewski, MSW

The cohort of young adults known as the millennial generation has been causing a stir for some time.

Generally considered as those born between the early 1980s and the mid-1990s, they are technologically savvy, highly social, socially tolerant, generally well educated and civically engaged. They upend social and business conventions, challenging old ways of thinking across academic, marketplace and political landscapes, and driving change and innovation at a lightning fast pace.

They also take a lot of fire. Criticized as coddled, entitled and immature, they are seen to embody all the characteristics of the insulter du jour, the overly sensitive and much-maligned “snowflake.”

HOW MILLENNIAL COPS DIFFER FROM PREVIOUS GENERATIONS

Millennials entering law enforcement today are more likely than earlier generations of cops to boast [college degrees](#) (and to seek even higher education), to come from widely diverse backgrounds, and to express openness to and acceptance of ideas that would strike many older officers as unconventional (or even “liberal”).

Many come pre-committed to maintaining a [work/life balance](#) in comparison to older colleagues, who wear years of working impossibly long hours and personal self-sacrifice (not to mention relentless pursuit of the almighty O.T. dollar!) like a badge of honor. They are less likely to center their social life around police culture, opting instead to compartmentalize their work and non-work lives.



While these traits are concerning to veteran officers and administrators, to others they reflect a wider sociological shift. In recent years, we have been advocating for police officers to develop a healthier work/life balance to address the stresses of the job, so we hope this generation's approach will become normalized over time.

With that said, millennials – and especially younger millennials – do exhibit one trait that is already affecting police agencies currently hiring and employing them. A generational wariness toward long-term employment commitments has created issues of employee retention for a profession that has traditionally expected and relied on workforce longevity to ensure stability and experience.

MILLENNIAL RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION CONCERNS

Known as “job hoppers,” millennials move from one employer to another, trying on different hats, and ready to jump ship for greener (or more interesting) pastures.

A 2012 poll of millennial workers found that as many as 91% expect to stay in any one job less than three years. To think law enforcement is drawing entirely from the 9% with expectations of greater stability is foolish. Further, “54% of millennials either want

to start a [business](#) or already have started one. And 72% of Generation Z (the post-millennial generation) want to start their own business.”

Virtually all new police hires today are coming from the younger end of the millennial pool, with the [Gen Z population](#) soon to follow as they come of recruitment age. [Gallup research](#) found 60% of employed millennials are open to new opportunities, and they are the generation most likely to switch jobs and least engaged in the workplace.

These numbers are raising concern in the private sector where companies are not only competing to recruit and hire the best young talent, but to retain staff and promote engagement. Losing employees impacts productivity and profits, increases employee-training costs and often damages the ability of a company to attract replacement workers. The stakes for law enforcement may even be higher.

Unlike the private sector that can generally expect its employee pool to remain in the game for up to 20 years longer than the typical police officer (who retires younger), they can draw from potential candidates across a wider range of age and experience. Law enforcement typically hires from a much younger pool, often due to statutory restrictions, with older candidates and experienced

lateral transfers possible, but still representing relatively few hires.

And as most police officers would probably attest, it can take three to five years for a young officer to become [truly proficient at the job](#). The cost of training a young officer runs into the tens of thousands of dollars in the first few months of employment alone, with hiring expenses, salary and benefits, training, uniforms, gear and field training officer costs. Some departments wash out from 10 percent-50 percent of new hires before they clear probation, and still others quickly decide, “I was wrong, this isn’t for me!” and leave on their own.

By the time an officer is solo, fully competent and invested for the long haul, a department has spent a small fortune. Send them to a few schools or invest in training for specialty positions or ancillary assignments and the cost increases. These are good investments if officers stick around long enough to produce benefits. Experienced, highly functioning, highly invested officers benefit their communities, departments and fellow officers. High turnover undermines good service, professionalism and morale.

Police agencies are not only competing for a smaller pool of potential applicants relative to the millennials – which is still the largest living demographic – but can expect more of the same when they start recruiting Gen Z, the smallest demographic and the one most idealizing entrepreneurship over working for someone else. Recruitment and retention may only become harder in the future, so focusing on officer retention strategies now is a top priority for law enforcement agencies.

PRINCIPLES OF RETAINING MILLENNIAL POLICE OFFICERS

The key principle on which to focus and work toward is engagement. Employee engagement is a critical factor in job satisfaction for almost all employees regardless of age, but the millennial cohort is the one most likely to leave in its absence. To foster engagement, police agencies must emphasize certain attitudes and practices from the top down.

1 RESPECT AN EMPLOYEE’S DESIRE FOR A WORK/LIFE BALANCE

The days of cops routinely sacrificing home and personal life for the job are over. Thanks to increased familial closeness and definitions of family expanded to include longtime friendship circles, the ubiquity of social media and tightened bonds it creates, and increased opportunities for socialization and lived “experiences,” millennial police officers are simply different than those of older generations.

Embrace the differences. If possible, invite younger officers to bring their family and friends around to show off the department, go on ride-alongs, meet bosses and coworkers, and experience the job. Involving those people most important to your young officers in their work world increases the likelihood of the officer bonding with the agency. Working to enhance valued work/life balance demonstrates good faith, empathy and valuing what is important to them.

2 FOSTER A SENSE OF PURPOSE

Millennials demand purpose. They need to feel invested in something bigger than themselves, that their work has meaning and value, and that their putting on the uniform each day is important. Police work can sometimes become a grind, where officers feel they are tasked busy work or simply spinning their wheels with little effect. It takes leadership and guidance, usually from a purpose-driven supervisor or fellow officer, for most employees to discern meaning from the mundane. There are countless “competent” managers in policing, but precious few leaders. Be that leader, regardless of rank.

In “[Millennials: The Job Hopping Generation](#),” Gallup writer Amy Adkins posits:

“It’s possible that many millennials actually don’t want to switch jobs, but their companies aren’t giving them compelling reasons to stay. When millennials see what appears to be a better opportunity, they have every incentive to take it. While millennials can come across as wanting more and more, the reality is that they just want a job that feels worthwhile -- and they will keep looking until they find it.”

What could be more worthwhile than law enforcement? For the opportunity to make immediate, lasting impact, policing should offer countless opportunities.

3 PROVIDE VARIED AND IMPACTFUL OPPORTUNITIES

In many law enforcement agencies, specialty assignments are doled out infrequently or given only to certain “golden children.” Opportunities for training, to take part on specialty teams or expand professional horizons are few. Even for high performers, this can create a sense of “I’ll never move up, or get a chance to do anything besides chase the radio,” leading to disillusionment and bitterness.

Even if specialty assignments are highly competitive and difficult to come by, we can still provide opportunities to learn and practice complex skill sets.

Providing opportunities for temporary assignments with specialized divisions allows an officer to practice and demonstrate what they are capable of, stay engaged and have a little fun, while letting permanently assigned officers get to know younger officers’ work ethic and potential.

Encourage patrol officers to work complex investigations, develop community-policing projects, and formulate and carry out traffic enforcement strategies. Supervisors can foster officer development by arranging mentorship and training opportunities to develop needed skills.

4 PROVIDE RECOGNITION AS A MATTER OF COURSE

Millennials are often criticized as the “participation trophy” generation, even by themselves, and there is certainly some validity to that. However, occasional recognition is valuable.

Leaders who care know that praising past and current behavior is the best way to predict future behavior. Praising those who have performed well virtually ensures they will continue whatever activity got them the praise. Recognition does not need to be formal or complex – a roll call “Atta boy!” goes a long way – but departmental awards are very powerful. Unfortunately, many departments see giving praise

as a sign of weakness and “ball busting” is the norm. Get past it.

5 CREATE AN ENVIRONMENT OF ADVOCACY AND TRUST

This one is huge, so do not underestimate it.

Millennials are especially untrusting of institutions and organizations. In [“Millennials Don’t Trust Anyone: That’s a big deal,”](#) political analyst Chris Cillaza writes, “Of 10 major societal institutions, just two – the military and scientists – garnered majority support from millennials on the question of whom they trust to do the right thing most of the time.” The one bright light in an otherwise depressingly cynical article is that the police came in third. So we are doing okay, it seems, among young adults!

If you are a supervisor or senior officer, create an environment of advocacy and trust. Have your subordinates’ backs, be willing to take heat for them when it is due, and create an environment of advocacy and trust where appropriate.

CONCLUSION

The millennial generation is the future of law enforcement. It is up to current police officers and law enforcement leaders to prepare and support them for the challenges they face. We are all responsible for the retention of solid, well-trained, highly engaged police officers, so let’s make sure we do right by them and the communities we serve.

About the Authors

Althea Olson, LCSW, and Ofc Mike Wasilewski, LCSW, have been married since 1994. Althea is a social worker in private practice at Fox Bend Counseling in Oswego (Illinois). Mike works full-time as a police officer for a large suburban Chicago agency, and part-time as a social worker with Fox Bend Counseling. They write on a wide range of topics to include officer wellness, relationships, mental health, morale, and ethics. Their writing led to them developing *More Than A Cop*, and they have traveled the country as police trainers teaching “survival skills off the street.”



5

reasons to find a partner for your background investigation process

An investigations partner brings focused skills and experience to help an agency make smarter hiring decisions, faster and at a lower cost

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By Laura Neitzel

Hiring for a law enforcement position is an important duty that deserves the time and effort required to find the perfect recruit. The right person can help law enforcement agencies build trust with their community. The wrong hire can not only cost an agency up to 30 percent of a first-year salary, according to the [Bureau of Labor Statistics](#), it can quickly destroy the trust your agency has worked so hard to earn.

Many law enforcement agencies across the country are experiencing a [shortage of officers](#) and, with the demand for officers projected to [grow by 7 percent between 2016 and 2026](#), agencies need an advantage in recruiting new candidates. Police officers in an agency with hiring needs may find a large percentage of their time on the job is spent completing background investigations to meet the unprecedented hiring demand. Adding this to an officer's existing responsibilities to fight crime and serve the community and it's easy to imagine an agency's resources becoming strained.

How can a police agency invest the substantial time and effort needed to hire the right candidate without diverting resources from its core purpose of serving and protecting the public? They should consider partnering with a [technology service provider](#) that specializes in law enforcement background investigations.

Here are five ways a partner can not only take the burden off department staff but also bring focused skills and experience to help an agency make smarter hiring decisions, faster and at a lower cost.

1 Speed

Even agencies that have been authorized to hire additional officers may struggle to outpace attrition, much less add to their forces. In Chicago, for instance, the mayor authorized a surge in hiring police officers. But, with the Chicago Police Department's background investigation process taking up to six months, they were losing good candidates to other agencies that could complete the hiring process more quickly. Using investigative technology company [KENTECH Consulting](#) to assist

in the investigative process reduced the recruit hiring process to one month, allowing Chicago PD to finally make a dent in their hiring backlog.

2 Cost

A survey of clients conducted by KENTECH found that agencies spend an average of 60 internal hours on background investigations which cost them over \$3,000 per candidate. KENTECH can bring the cost down by up to 65 percent because of efficiencies gained through its high-tech law enforcement technology software, ClarityIQ, and a high-touch process of spreading the work across multiple teams, yielding more investigative hours per candidate (an average of 120 hours) at a lower cost. These efficiencies also allow an agency to draw talent from a bigger pool of candidates.

3 Deeper insight

A solutions provider who specializes in background investigations has unique tools that an internal investigator doesn't. To go beyond the usual checks, KENTECH uses a hybrid "high tech, high touch" approach that combines [innovative technology](#) with human insight. Over 1 billion data points are extracted and analyzed from over 1 billion records of public and private data then given over to a team of investigators who use their detective skills to assess character, uncover additional hiring concerns and other psychographic information. Investigators screen each candidate on six signature dimensions to create a thorough profile that evaluates: honesty, criminality, propensity for financial corruption, community impact, U.S. allegiance and the agency's overall liability exposure if granted police powers. This thorough character assessment helps gauge a candidate's trustworthiness – an essential factor for helping agencies build positive relationships in their communities.

"As former police detectives, our investigators are great in terms of their detective skills and character assessment. But I think also they add an extra quality by taking so much pride in their sense of duty and ensuring the integrity of their profession. They want to offer up the best candidates because, after all, it's their profession, too," explains Ken Coats, CEO and founder of KENTECH.

4 Customized search

Hiring for law enforcement requires more scrutiny than most professions. As such, law enforcement agencies need a partner that understands the special requirements for hiring, can customize a search to agency needs and screen for specific qualifications. A [specialized partner](#) can also help an agency comply with hiring practices imposed by a Department of Justice consent decree or, proactively diversify its officer base as a best practice in policing.

5 Compliance with best practices

The right background investigation partner knows the ins and outs of [complying with privacy laws](#) and should be fully committed to honoring employment standards like the Fair Credit Reporting Act, the Americans with Disability Act, the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act, and General Data Protection Regulations. Working with a partner allows police officers to be focused on policing rather than keeping up with evolving employment laws and standards.

An investigations partner can also take the grunt work and guesswork out of hiring. Once a background investigation is complete, KENTECH creates a customized report that scores candidates according

to the criteria set by the agency. The report scoring tool quickly identifies critical information surfaced in the background report, helping agencies make better hiring decisions which reduce liability and costly hiring mistakes.

Finding the right candidate who can serve with integrity and help build trust with the public is at the heart of the “high tech, high touch” approach that KENTECH brings to the background investigation process.

“We help agencies solve their hiring challenges by accelerating the speed by which a candidate can get through the system,” Coats says. “Looking toward the long-term, by doing our job right and helping agencies hire highly-qualified, trustworthy candidates, we also help them start bridging that trust gap with the community.”

As law enforcement agencies are under increasing pressure to provide greater transparency and diversify their workforce to reflect their communities, hiring officers who can be trusted to serve with honor and integrity is essential. A background investigation partner like KENTECH can provide an extra measure of independent verification and assurance that departments are on the path to hiring success.





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