



Recruiting and Hiring – The Challenges Have Never Been Greater: What You Need to Know About Today’s Dwindling Applicant Pool and Strategies to be Successful.

1) Presenter name, title, phone, email, agency/company, mailing address

Jon Walters
President
Public Safety Testing, Inc.
20818 – 44th Ave W, Suite 160
Lynnwood, WA 98036
Phone: 425.776.9615
Email: Jon@PublicSafetyTesting.com

2) Target audience

Target: Executives, Managers, Supervisors, HR Professionals, Recruiters, Background Investigators, Civil Service Commissioners, Civil Service Staff, and/or those involved or responsible for recruitment, selection and retention of agency staff.

3) Brief description

There are fewer qualified applicants and that trend will continue for the foreseeable future. To be more successful, you will need to act quickly, streamline your hiring process and engage in vigorous outreach and recruiting. Hear about proven strategies that work to improve the size, quality and diversity of the applicant pool.

4) Description of course content

Abstract:

The challenges related to recruiting and hiring have never been greater for our profession. The pool of qualified applicants is dwindling that that trend will continue for the foreseeable future. To be more successful you will need to act quickly, streamline your hiring process and engage in vigorous outreach and recruiting. Hear about proven strategies that work to improve the size, quality and diversity of the applicant pool.

Learning Objectives:

- Participants will learn about the current state of public safety recruiting and hiring: economy continues to improve, record low unemployment rates, record high number of job vacancies in all sectors, increasing number of retirements and a labor force participation rate falling to its lowest point in 40 years
- Participants will learn of low/no cost methods to streamline their hiring process and how to improve their agency's recruiting efforts. Discussion will occur on why doing so is more important than ever before.
- Participants will learn methods and strategies to improve the size, quality and diversity of their hiring pool and what attracts this millennial generation of candidates to serve.

Methodology:

- PowerPoint slides and video examples will be used to cover key points and provide an understanding of the learning objectives.
- The state of the American economy will be discussed, including projections and why the applicant pool will continue to decrease.
- We will talk about traditional ways public safety staff are recruited and hired; discuss why and how we must be more responsive, fast and agile in our hiring methods. Public safety agencies are competing not only with each other, but also with the lightning fast private sector hiring processes.
- We will address the important need for diversity and what has been learned about effective recruiting and outreach methods. Generational issues will be addressed.
- We will provide examples of proven recruiting and hiring strategies and how to involve other important stakeholders, including but not limited to HR, Civil Service, the community, etc.



Police Officer Recruiting & Hiring

The Challenges Have Never Been Greater

By Jon Walters, Founder and President of Public Safety Testing, Inc.

Law enforcement is in the midst of the most challenging hiring environment the profession has faced in many decades. News articles and agencies from all regions talk about the shortage of police officer applicants, the impacts of this shortage on staffing and overtime, and the difficulty with candidates passing background investigations.

Job Market Status

Law enforcement is not the only occupation facing severe shortages of qualified job seekers, particularly within the United States. There is a worker shortage—not a shortage of work.¹ There's a nurse shortage, teacher shortage, construction worker shortage, skilled labor shortage, and so on. The trucking industry estimates a shortfall of as many as 106,000 drivers by 2022.² The airline pilot shortage is so severe that Boeing is working on technology for pilotless planes. Why? With the projected pilot shortage estimated at 637,000 over the next 20 years, airlines might not need as many new planes.³ Boeing views pilotless transportation as critical to the company's future.

The U.S. unemployment rate as of May 2018 is at 3.8 percent, which is the lowest it has been since April 2000. Some states are experiencing their lowest unemployment rates since modern record keeping began. The number of job openings in the United States has reached 6.7 million, exceeding the number of unemployed for the first time since these figures began reporting. The (LFPR) is defined as, "those working or seeking work"—commonly known as the "applicant pool." Since January 2014, the LFPR in May 2018 was 62.7 percent. March 1978 was the last time this figure was that low; in other words, the applicant pool has not been this small since 1978. The bad news is the U.S. Department of Labor is projecting a stagnant, if not declining, LFPR for the foreseeable future.⁴

Attracting Candidates to Law Enforcement

There are two immediate steps agencies must take to be more competitive:

1. Streamline the hiring process.
2. Significantly enhance the agency's recruiting efforts.

#1: Streamline the Hiring Process

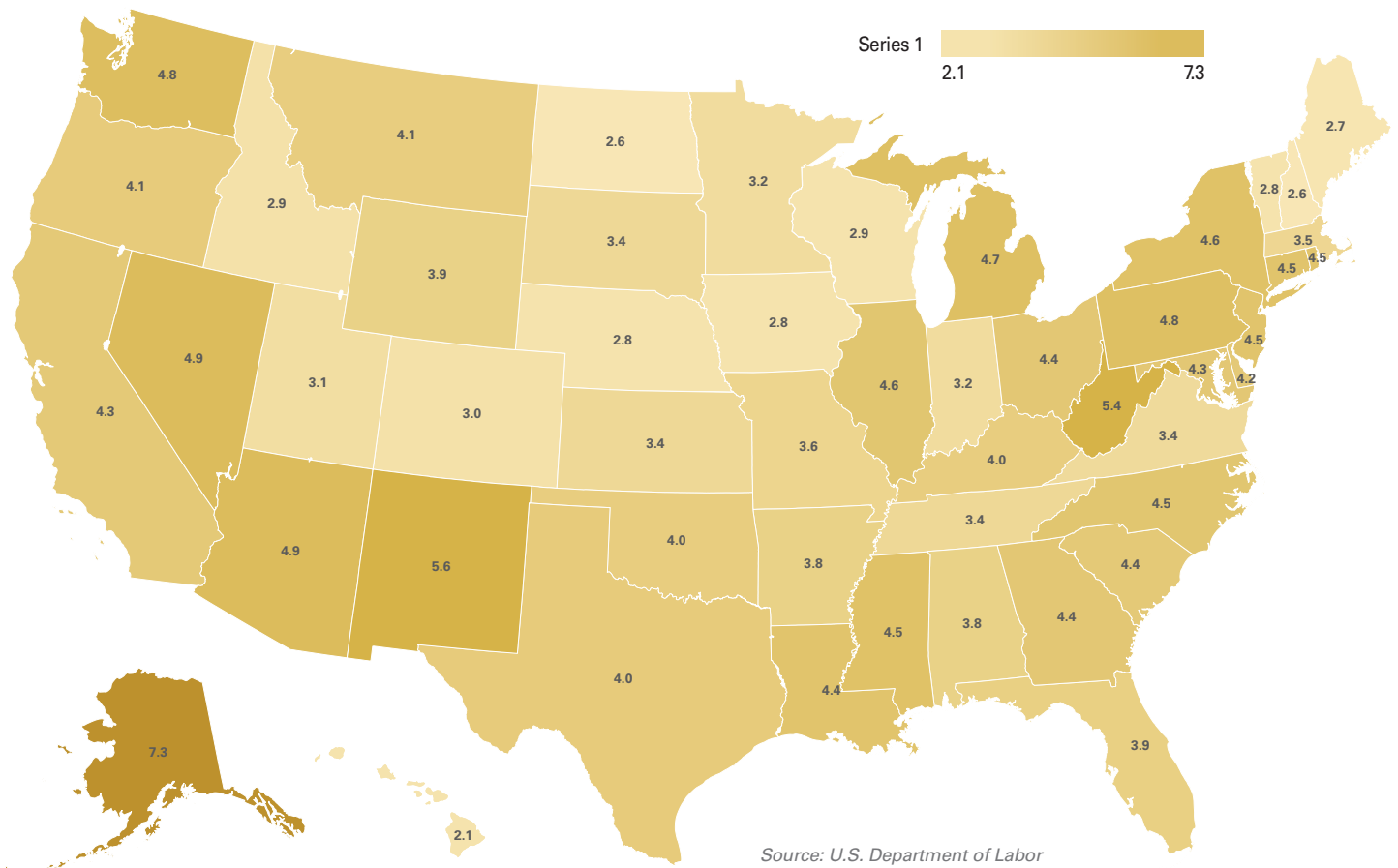
Currently, at most agencies, it takes too long to hire police officers. Streamlining the hiring process will pay big dividends. Some agencies can shave off months or weeks from the process, but even a few days would help tremendously.

One large study revealed the average time to hire across all sectors in the United States was about 23 days. For police officers, it was almost 128 days—the longest found in this study.⁵ If law enforcement has any hope of being more competitive, the hiring process must be shortened.

To make it more efficient, agency leaders or human resources (HR) personnel should closely examine every step of the agency's hiring process, from the initial advertising to the final selection. Map it out—document what is done, who does it, when it's done, and why it's done. Evaluate what the potential outcome would be if a step was modified, eliminated, or combined with other steps. This effort will receive more buy-in if everyone with a stake in the outcome is involved.

Also, look closely at the agency's minimum standards and evaluate whether each one is truly required. Many department records divisions and 911 centers require applicants to have a valid driver's license, but don't require the employee to drive as part of their job duties. In 2015, the number of teens with driver's licenses hit a record low of 71.5 percent.⁶ Requiring a driver's license when employees

Figure 1: Unemployment Rate by State, March 2018



Source: U.S. Department of Labor

are not required to drive might be inadvertently eliminating many otherwise qualified candidates. As another example, in terms of tattoos, 13 percent of baby boomers, 36 percent of Gen Xers, and 47 percent of millennials have them.⁷ Again, an overly strict policy that prohibits all tattoos may eliminate some otherwise good candidates. Does the agency have non-negotiable automatic disqualifiers, or does the hiring process look at the “entire” candidate? Is one incident or indiscretion that occurred years ago indicative of the overall character of the candidate and how he or she has lived the rest of his or her life?

This is not to advocate lowering critical standards. This job is too important, too complex, and too demanding to not get the right aspirant. The recommendation remains, however, to examine the agency’s requirements to ensure they are up to date—and that each is absolutely necessary.

Some fairly simple, low-cost examples of hiring process improvements include the following:

- Eliminating multiple forms that ask for the same information
- Using current technology such as candidates’ self-scheduling for interviews, video conferencing for out-of-region candidates, and using new lie detection technology to quickly screen candidates early
- Outsourcing various steps of the hiring process to private companies
- Reducing multiple rounds of internal review and approval to just one
- Frequently communicating with the candidates (increases participation rates)
- Providing a hiring checklist (eliminates multiple “what’s next” questions and defines the timeline and expectations for candidates)

#2: Significantly Enhance the Agency’s Recruiting Efforts

Candidates are no longer walking in the door—agencies must go to them; it must engage in deliberate, meaningful, and vigorous recruiting efforts more than ever before. Law enforcement is competing with the private sector for the same candidates. Private businesses spend lots of money to study the candidates, learn what appeals to them, and then aggressively go after them. Law enforcement agencies cannot match the recruiting budgets of private companies, but they can and must be more aggressive in their efforts to attract candidates.

The 21st-Century Candidate

Law enforcement, like most professions, is currently recruiting predominantly from the millennial generation, who will soon surpass baby boomers as the largest living generation in the United States.⁸ Much has been written about millennials, and one hears plenty of discussion about how “different” the applicant pool is today. There are several characteristics that are generally attributed to the millennials:

- were born between 1980 and 1996
- are the most ethnically and racially diverse generation
- are confident, have high expectations, and are achievement oriented
- aspire to make a difference with their work
- are tech dependent and need to be “connected”
- expect fast turnaround and fast results
- have often been raised by “helicopter parents”
- embrace new ideas and technology
- value experiences over possessions
- demand a work-life balance
- might consider switching jobs every three to four years

Figure 2: Generations by Birth Years and Age

Generation	Years	Age in 2018
Post-Millennials (Gen Z)	1997 to today	≤21
Millennials (Gen Y)	1981–1996	22–37
Generation X	1965–1980	38–53
Baby Boomers	1946–1964	54–72
Silent Generation	1928–1945	73–90
Greatest Generation	Before 1928	91+

Source: Michael Dimock, “Defining Generations: Where Millennials End and Post-Millennials Begin,” Pew Research Center, March 1, 2018.

Many millennials have grown up being told they can have anything they want. Then they enter the real world and job market and find out they are not so special, they get nothing for simply participating, and they are not entitled to something just because they want it.⁹ They don’t need trophies, but they do want frequent reinforcement, and not just for exceptional work. They want a coach, not a boss, and they want to work with people, not for them.

Millennials value their time off and seek work-life balance. For many, time off is worth more than the extra money earned in overtime. Today, staffing shortages are mandating overtime, and officers are saying they are exhausted. Some are looking at other departments and even other career fields in search of that work-family-life balance.

Talk with candidates about the region’s recreational opportunities, the quality of schools, cultural activities, and other attractive qualities about the community. Quality-of-life issues are important to millennials. Be sure the employment website describes these opportunities as well.

When speaking with millennial applicants, do not automatically assume they are interested in a 30-year career with a pension. As a matter of fact, their generation is described as the “job-hopping generation,” and some plan on changing jobs every three to four years. Capitalize on that by describing various opportunities within the organization for changes and growth—“careers within a career.” Describe the opportunities for specialty assignments and promotions, both vertical and horizontal paths within the organization. Don’t ask them to commit to 25 years, but instead ask for 5 years. They relate better to those terms and, after five years, they will find they have some seniority, good benefits, and the start to some serious savings in their retirement plan.

Recruitment Plan

In addition to understanding whom agencies are recruiting, the framework for an agency’s recruitment plan should include many other aspects. Some of these include the following:

Agency’s Website. This is where candidates often first look for jobs in a department. There should be an employment link clearly visible on the home page. From there, make it easy to navigate and find more information about the department, the community, minimum requirements, the hiring process, pay and benefits, and how to connect with a recruiter.

The website should also include photos and videos that reflect the types of candidates the agency is looking for, as it is very helpful from a recruiting standpoint that viewers can envision themselves as successful in the organization. Be aware of the overt and sometimes subtle messages that recruiting photos and videos send. For example, do they reflect that the department is hiring for the spirit of service or for the spirit of adventure?

Mobile Devices. Mobile phones have surpassed desktop computers as the most common way to surf the Internet. Nearly 50 percent of job seekers have applied for a job via their mobile devices.¹⁰ The goal must be to get the agency’s hiring information directly on candidates’ phones—and technology now exists that allows this. It ensures that they will walk away with the information versus handing them a business card or literature that they can easily misplace or throw away.

Social Media. Social media is where this generation of candidates communicates and conducts much of its job hunting. If the department is not actively involved in social media, it really needs to be. Social media is most effective when it is conversational and part of a larger department communication plan. For more information on engaging community members and candidates, the IACP’s Social Media Center is an excellent resource.¹¹

Everyone Is a Recruiter. Imagine the positive impact on hiring efforts if everyone in an organization successfully recruited one person during the next year. Rather than just a specific assignment, include recruiting as part of everyone’s normal duties, just like handling a theft call. Make recruiting a responsibility for each individual, from the chief to the line officer, in every division, and engage staff in actively recruiting their future coworkers.

Many police officers have shared that they had no intention of entering a law enforcement career, but someone in the field encouraged them to test for his or her agency. Word of mouth is a powerful recruiting tool. Friends and family members play a significant role in the recruiting effort. A large state highway patrol agency shared that 75 percent of their recruits were there because an agency employee recruited them. That employee was either a family member, neighbor, coach, or friend.¹²

Just like staff are trained on how to perform many aspects of their jobs, they should be trained on how to recruit. A well-intentioned officer with no training can hurt recruiting efforts. Recruiter training should include skills training and role playing—and focus on how to effectively recruit, those whom the agency is seeking to recruit key agency needs, and so forth. Reinforce the individual recruiting role at briefings, through supervisors, and in regular communications so that it eventually becomes part of the agency’s culture rather than a separate assignment.

Recruiting Staff. Larger agencies will have a devoted recruiting staff. Who is assigned to the recruiting function is one of the most important selections an executive will make. Training is important, but there are also outstanding recruiters who have had no formal recruiter training. They reflect what the agency is looking for; they clearly understand the agency’s hiring needs, mission, and values; they are approachable, friendly, and engaging; and they are enthusiastic, but not overbearing. On the flip side, there are also ineffective recruiters who are there only because they were ordered to be there and show no passion for their role.

Background Investigators. Sometimes the best crime investigators are not necessarily the best background investigators. Background investigators are the face of the agency during much of the hiring process, and candidates draw conclusions about what it might be like to work at the agency based on their interactions with staff during the hiring process. Remind background investigators that candidates are future employees, not suspects, and it is an employment interview, not an interrogation.

Agency Open House. Many agencies have found conducting an open house or hiring workshop is more effective than attending career fairs where they are competing with many other employers and professions. Folks that attend an open house are interested in the department and in public safety-related jobs. Department members talk about what it's like to work there, describe the hiring process, explain how to be successful and pitfalls to avoid, and provide other information about a career at the agency and life in the community. Agencies that have conducted these types of events often say more people attended than they expected. Remember to promote these events through social and other media.

Laid-off Workers. Even in today's economy and tight job market, some companies are laying off employees. In such a company, the focus of the HR department is often to help affected workers find new employment. This provides an opportunity for an agency. Chiefs or recruiters can contact these HR outplacement staff and ask if the agency can do a presentation or provide information about opportunities. Companies are often very happy to accommodate. Law enforcement agencies can find out about companies that are laying off through typical news outlets. Another resource is the Worker Adjustment and Retraining Notification (WARN). This is a 1988 U.S. federal law that basically requires notice of layoffs.¹³ Find out about these notices by doing a web search for WARN notices in a particular state.

Conclusion

The policing profession is in the midst of many challenges; recruiting and hiring is just one. However, successful recruiting and hiring are vital to strengthening an agency's foundation to better face many of the other challenges. Based on the current and projected competition in the job market, law enforcement must be more proactive in its recruiting efforts. To be successful, actions to take now involve developing an agency recruitment plan that includes streamlining the hiring process and actively and vigorously engaging in effective recruitment strategies. ❖

Jon Walters is the founder and president of Public Safety Testing, Inc. Jon's policing career includes serving seven years as a police chief in the Pacific Northwest. Jon is a graduate of the 171st session of the FBI National Academy. He has earned a BA in law and justice and an MS in organization development.

Notes:

¹Danielle Paquette, "2018's Challenge: Too Many Jobs, Not Enough Workers," *Washington Post*, December 28, 2017.

²Paul Davidson, "Truck Driver Shortage Is Raising Prices, Delaying Deliveries," *USA Today*, April 26, 2018.

³Jon Ostrower, "Boeing Bets Big on Flying Taxis and Pilotless Planes," *CNN Money*, October 5, 2017.

⁴Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS), "Job Market Continued to Improve in 2017 as the Unemployment Rate Declined to a 17-year Low," *Monthly Labor Review*, April 2018; BLS, "Job Openings and Labor Turnover Summary," news release, May 8, 2018; BLS, "Labor Force Statistics from the Current Population Survey," April 2018.

⁵Andrew Chamberlain, *Why Is Hiring Taking Longer: New Insights from Glassdoor Data* (Glassdoor, June 2015).

⁶Tim Henderson, "Why Teens Still Don't Want to Get a Driver's License," *Stateline* (blog), March 03, 2017.

⁷Larry Shannon-Missal, "Tattoo Takeover: Three in Ten Americans Have Tattoos, and Most Don't Stop at Just One," *The Harris Poll*, February 10, 2016.

⁸Richard Fry, "Millennials Projected to Overtake Baby Boomers as America's Largest Generation," Pew Research Center, March 1, 2018.

⁹"Simon Sinek—Millennials in the Workplace," video, Inside Quest, https://www.youtube.com/watch?time_continue=33&v=5MC2X-LRbKE, December 28, 2016.

¹⁰Yoni Heisler, "Mobile Internet Usage Surpasses Desktop Usage for the First Time in History," *BGR*, November 2, 2016; LinkedIn Talent Solutions, *Mobile Recruiting Playbook*; LinkedIn Talent Solutions, *Mobile Recruiting Strategy*.

¹¹IACP, "IACP Center for Social Media," <http://www.IACPsocialmedia.org>.

¹²Brent Carter (lieutenant, California Highway Patrol, Professional Training Section), email, October 26, 2017.

¹³U.S. Department of Labor, Employment and Training Administration, "The Worker Adjustment and Retraining Notification Act," factsheet, <https://www.doleta.gov/programs/factsht/warn.htm>.

Mr. Walters was one of the many great presenters at IACP 2017.

To learn even more about leadership and law enforcement topics, attend IACP 2018. Visit www.theIACPconference.org to register for IACP 2018 and to see the great speakers and topics scheduled for this year's event!

JOIN US!

IACP 2018 October 6–9, 2018
Orange County Convention Center
Orlando, Florida
theIACPconference.org

HIRING & BEYOND: IACP Professional Services

IACP is committed to strengthening the future of policing. Whether examining existing hiring and recruiting processes and providing guidance on process and efficiency or hiring and promoting the next leaders of your agency, IACP can assist through the following services:

- » Management and Staffing Studies
- » Executive Search
- » Promotional Testing and Assessment Centers

For more information, visit www.theIACP.org or email, professionalservices@theiacp.org.

Jon Walters is the Founder/President of Public Safety Testing, Inc, a firm that specializes in professional recruiting, pre-employment testing, investigations, and promotional testing. Jon's policing career includes serving seven years as a police chief in the Pacific Northwest. He also served as the Executive Director of the Western Regional Institute for Community Oriented Public Safety (WRICOPS), a U.S. Department of Justice Regional Community Policing Institute that served five states. In this position, he was responsible for managing federal programs designed to enhance police-community relations, trust and partnerships to address crime, fear of crime and quality of life issues at the local level.

Jon is a graduate of the 171st session of the FBI National Academy. He has earned a Bachelor of Arts degree in Law and Justice and a Master of Science degree in Organization Development. In addition, Jon received his Supervisory, Mid-Manager, and Executive level certifications from the Washington State Criminal Justice Training Commission.

Jon has presented "*Public Safety Recruiting & Hiring – The Challenges Have Never Been Greater*" at the following conferences:

- International Association of Chiefs of Police Conference 2016 in San Diego
- International Association of Chiefs of Police Conference 2017 in Philadelphia
- Washington Association of Sheriffs and Police Chiefs Conference 2017
- Oregon Police Chiefs Executive Leadership Training Seminar 2017
- Washington Fire Chiefs Conference 2018