

# REPRESENT

Whether you're local, county or state police and assigned to a motor unit the actual name of the group could be different however the overall goal and objectives for each team remains the same. Or do they?

Every team has a different entry level standard on how to choose and train new personnel some more challenging then others however standards do exist. Every team should have some type of continuous training which focuses on job relevant tasks again some more challenging then others. Some teams have strict physical profile standards and some teams do not have any and again those operating procedures vary from team to team.

Webster's dictionary defines a team as:

- 1- a group working together
- 2- to join together in a team
- 3- to unite in a team
- 4- two or more players on the same side in a game

A motor unit is a team.

Even though teams vary in procedures I'm confident that all teams agree on the most important objective or primary job responsibility and two studies also show that the number one task for motor officers nationwide is traffic enforcement.

Being on the motorcycle offers many advantages, not only with enforcement but education and community contact. A motor officer is very approachable while mounted on the motor when compared with his peers inside a patrol vehicle with the windows rolled up talking on the cell phone. Can you remember a time when someone asked to take a picture of you and your patrol car?

Knowing and understanding that the welfare of the team or organization is far greater than your individual needs is something that usually arrives with time and experience.

With that last statement now comes the most important issue of this article. Once you become a member of any motor unit your actions no longer represent you as an individual. Once you are awarded a position on the team and put on boots and breeches you now REPRESENT many!

If you perform well the team performed well and if you fail, then team fails but this statement requires a great deal of additional accountability.

### A real example:

What if a member of your unit displays a “chip on their shoulder” with the attitude that “I’m or we” are better than others or demonstrates unacceptable behavior with other law enforcement officers or civilians.

Unfortunately we see this occur in professional sports when one athlete creates problems either on or off the field of play. It not only affects the individual but the organization and other team members.

Another relevant example is using Police Motorcycle Training Seminars.

When Officer David Sciandra won first place overall at the Harley-Davidson Competition held in Milwaukee in August of 2008 he not only represented the Jacksonville Motor Unit but the entire Jacksonville Sheriff’s Office with a job well done!

Now what about the other guy on your team who rides on the edge: always bangs side to side with the floor boards, working the throttle, locking the rear brake with a slight skid. Every motor unit either has one or did at some time but this unprofessional behavior should be stopped by the leadership of your unit because the actions of that one represent all of you! Not to mention the riding skill that they are demonstrating is dangerous to the rider and those who surround that motor officer. Again with experience, time in the saddle and proper leadership and training this rider will learn that “smooth is fast”.

How do you “Represent” your team? What does “Represent” truly mean to you?

Webster’s dictionary defines **Represent** as:

- 1- to stand for
  - The uniform worn by the motor officer
- 2- to portray
  - The image of being held to a higher standard because of your position of being in a specialty unit
- 3- to act or speak on behalf of
  - Members who are part of this team must lead by example
- 4- to describe a specific character or quality
  - Character and quality are no question traits that make up Team members

Supervisors and instructors ultimately this responsibility of “REPRESENT” falls upon you so take charge and lead from the front. You must help put out cones for training and again pick them up at the end of the day and without question you must attend training and practice while you attend. The concept of “been there done that” does not apply to those young motors who never observed your participation. Supervisors/instructors you don’t have to be the best rider but you must ride and train without any concern of embarrassment because of your skill level.

The team is a reflection of those who make the decisions therefore you must “represent”!

For the supervisors who have been assigned to the motor unit for an administrative assignment who have no experience in traffic or motorcycle operations you have even more of a challenge. The first and most important reason is because this assignment probably should never happen but if it has make it work. How can you lead and evaluate in this specialty assignment when you yourself have never completed a basic motorcycle school or worked a Selective Traffic Enforcement Program. The second and more important reason is because you have to earn trust, loyalty and respect from a group who have volunteered for this position and who have made many sacrifice's to remain on the team. How will you inspire them to “represent” if you have never performed?

If you fall into this category then understand that learning should be an on-going and continuous throughout our career so get out there and learn the job along with earning respect.

REPRESENT must come from the team as a whole but more important from the individual motor officer and here are a few basic line principles:

1- Attitude: A motor officer must have a positive attitude without having a “chip” on his shoulder or the thought that he is better than anyone who is not on Motors. For any operator who believes that he is better you will only separate from the rank and file and may create the “us vs. them” mentality. Even worse for those teams who feel that they are the best team....there are no such teams.

Remember when we start to believe that we are better then others and also believe that we are the best we may fail. The reason for failure is the lack of learning and preparation after all if you're already the best then why continue to improve and practice.

In 2007 when the New England Patriots were running the tables with an undefeated NFL season their Head Coach not only spoke about being “humble” but many of the players wore t-shirts with “Humble Pie” printed on the front.

2- Behavior: The behavior that you display with the team and more important without the team truly identifies the heart beat of the team. Don't allow unprofessional unacceptable behavior to stop the heart beat that you have worked so diligent to establish. If embarrassment is brought to your team by a member deal with it swiftly without weakness, if you fail or hesitate on your decision you will only harm those who truly represent the team. Leaders do your job!

The behaviors of one is the behavior of all and if that one cannot stand alone and be professional then eliminate the problem because good leadership involves taking control for the best interest of the team. Leadership does not only come from those with stripes and brass on the collar but from those members who truly make the team operate.

The "locker room leader" can be more valuable than any supervisor by rank. The team gravitates toward this individual because he walks the walk and represents the team. Others go to the locker room leader for advice and direction they seek input and acceptance. Supervisors/instructors this individual can truly help make you successful or they can "rock the boat" by creating problems, embrace this leader and use this position to improve the unit.

3- Command Presence: To wear the uniform or pin you must exhibit command presence to represent. Being physically fit demonstrates your commitment and dedication as an individual and then as a team member because of the high standards that you are required to maintain.

4- Desire: It truly takes a special kind of law enforcement officer to accept the role of a motor officer. The desire to seek a new approach in conducting business, a fresh opportunity to learn and of course the tactical techniques used to solve problems.

4- Professionalism: Ensure that everyone around you has a positive opinion of you as an individual which will then have the same opinion of the team.

Your agency has a large investment in you and the team, education, equipment, experience and training just to name a few. Just like our personal financial investments preparing for our families future this total investment made by the agency is preparing you for that one day.

At the Broward Sheriff's Office we have 54 motor deputies who ride 2008 Harley-Davidson Road Kings that we lease from Fort Lauderdale Harley-Davidson which carries a large monthly investment and commitment from the agency.

Agency investment continues with a two week intensive basic motorcycle training program followed by a four week field training program. If the deputy successfully completes all six weeks then they are assigned a motor position. From that point they are scheduled to attend eight hours of in-service training every month, annual day and night qualifications, eight hours of firearms training with the motorcycle and eight hours of traffic stop scenarios to test their ability and skill in force on force realistic scenarios.

Now remains the individual deputy equipment investment; Super Seer Helmet with wireless SET COM, Sam Browne, long and short sleeve shirts to include an "honor guard" shirt used specifically for special events, five pairs of breeches, quality reflective rain gear and motorcycle boots.

It's difficult to measure the actual training costs for each deputy but without question we can easily use the word "high" then adding in approximately \$3500.00 for the total start up costs for each motor deputy the investment is large. And let's not forget the monthly payment for the motorcycle lease.

Most articles written for motor officers discuss training issues, accident avoidance exercises, escort procedures and various operational concerns. But how many discuss the personal ethics, leadership and values of the team members. Whether you're a local, county or state a part-time or full-time team motor officer your personal character will be displayed by your actions, behavior and conduct.

Being part of a special team is an honor and you have a choice to "walk the walk" or be the guy with the chip on his shoulder who is a member of a team with an attitude. If you are that one I hope your leadership is strong enough to make an immediate impact by correcting the attitude or removing you from the unit.

Find your bearing: Bearing is general appearance, carriage, deportment and conduct. This is the ability to look, act and speak like a leader. It is an essential element in a leader's effectiveness and should be cultivated by maintaining impeccable personal appearance, avoiding profane or vulgar language, keeping your word, holding your temper, speaking clearly and walking erect.

Copied from the: *United States Marine Corps Leadership Traits*.

Make the choice.

#### BIO:

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