

LEE STRUBLE, DIRECTOR OF PUBLIC SAFETY, MONROE COMMUNITY COLLEGE

## Communication + customer service = positive perception of your unit

A history major while in college, **Lee Struble** didn't imagine back then where he would end up professionally. But Struble, who serves as director of public safety at **Monroe (N.Y.) Community College** in New York, could not be better fitted for a career in campus security.

He entered the field after working in private security for some time. The collegiality of the campus environment and the interaction with students won him over immediately. That was 24 years ago. Since, he's kept busy by becoming involved in different professional associations and making sure his unit is always seen in a positive light.

If you're looking for ways to improve how your unit interacts with the rest of the campus community, Struble's insights could prove valuable.

"There are two main things I believe in," said Struble, who also chairs the **International Association of Campus Law Enforcement Administrators' Crime Prevention Committee**. "The first is providing excellent customer service, and the second is communicating well with everyone."

At many institutions, the campus safety unit is often seen as the enemy — and not just by students, but by faculty and staff as well, he explained. But wherever Struble goes, that quickly changes.

"I'm always telling people, 'We must get along with

everyone,'" he said. "Public safety departments can create a lot of obstacles for themselves simply by not making an effort to get along with others."

To that end, he makes it a point to collaborate with people from other parts of the campus whenever possible. If he notices friction coming from any department, he acts on it.

"For example, let's say the residence assistants were talking badly about us. I might go to them and say something like, 'Why don't we all get together and play some volleyball?'" he said.

Often, that's all it takes to turn a bad perception into a positive one.

Additionally, Struble makes it a point to maintain a complete open-door policy, he said. Whether it's a student, a faculty member, or one of his officers who needs to talk to him, remaining accessible keeps people happy.

"Campus security folks really need to embrace that this is a very customer service-oriented field," he said.

This is particularly true when dealing with students. As a parent himself, he knows that he would want someone in his position at his child's college to give his child's problems the attention they deserve.

"Most students are so busy and so stressed out that if one of them comes in here asking to speak with me, and I don't give him the time, more than likely that student won't come back."

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LEE STRUBLE

### WORD OF ADVICE

#### Know what you want to learn from your unit's self-assessment

As the president of a security consulting firm called **WSM Trainers and Consultants**, **Lee Struble**, the director of public safety at **Monroe (N.Y.) Community College**, is a big believer in assessment.

He began the company in the mid-1990s. At the time, he was conducting trainings for other campus safety administrators on how to self-assess their units. After one such session, someone asked if he could come and assess her unit. He did, and ever since, the requests have kept on coming.

If you've been thinking about assessing your unit but don't know how to go about it, Struble's advice may help.

First, he suggests that you define what it is you want to get out of the assessment. If you don't know what it is you want to learn from a self-assessment, you're

pretty much flying blind, he explained.

Second, make people feel like they can share anything. If you're trying to assess how content your officers are, let them know they can be completely candid, and give them a forum for opening up that allows them some sort of anonymity. Want to assess how the campus community perceives your unit? Consider using a customer service survey instead of asking people in person, where they might feel more inclined to be overly kind. ■

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about



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