

ILEETA Digest Article - Debriefing for Law Enforcement By O2X Human Performance by Adam La Reau

For law enforcement officers, answering the call to protect and serve is paramount. Each response provides a valuable learning opportunity. In order to progress, deliberately reviewing events and training exercises is crucial; and, a standardized debriefing protocol will help turn every experience into an opportunity to optimize performance.

At ILEETA, Navy SEAL veteran and co-founder of O2X Human Performance Adam La Reau will discuss why debriefing, or After Action Review (AAR), is key to developing a culture of continual learning and daily improvement. La Reau will highlight how effective debriefing helps officers build resilience, maximize performance, and keep their communities safe.

Conducting Effective Debriefing and AARs

AARs create action plans for improvement through analysis of operations. This process of identifying lessons learned will foster a culture of continual learning and growth mindset, elements of success in any unit (Darling, Parry, & Moore, 2005). Standardized protocols for effective debriefing are also key to achieving the desired outcomes for team and individual performance.

An effective AAR is not a casual post-call conversation; it requires a systematic analysis of all pre-, during, and post-call elements of the event or drill. Setting the stage for an AAR should include clear guidelines for the tone, participants, and space of the debriefing session. Debriefs are not meant to place blame or accusations on individuals, and expectations for how feedback is provided should be well defined. The final component of an effective AAR is standardization so that the process becomes embedded in department culture to positively affect change.

The Foundation

- Individuals must enter debriefing with an attitude of trust, honesty, and willingness to learn.
- The purpose of debriefing is growth and learning, not blame or punishment.
- Participation of members of every rank is key; all viewpoints matter and each perspective offers unique insight.
- Include team members from all parts of a call, from dispatchers to any officers or leaders.

The Process

- AARs should be consistent and expected as part of protocol. They should follow every incident, large or small, training or real-world. Each event presents an opportunity for improvement.
- Create a standardized template that covers critical components of a call. Answer key questions: What was the ideal outcome? What was the actual outcome? What caused the outcome? What can be improved for the next call?
- Within the template, include plans for action following the debrief. The team identified areas of improvement, provided feedback, and acknowledged lessons learned; don't let it go to waste. End the AAR with action items to implement for future calls.

Final Thoughts and Takeaways

Research shows that AARs are most effective when viewed as a consistent, structured method of enhancing performance over time, not random conversations when outcomes do not meet expectations (DeGrosky, 2005). Leaders in law enforcement must use AARs to positively impact department culture and facilitate long-term success of officers and teams. Join O2X's co-founder Adam La Reau at ILEETA 2018 to learn how to implement AARs so tactical athletes can build resilience, maximize performance, and finish their careers as strong as they started.

References:

Darling, M., Parry, C., & Moore, J. (2005, July). *Learning in the Thick Of It*. Retrieved January 2018, from Harvard Business Review: <https://hbr.org/2005/07/learning-in-the-thick-of-it>

DeGrosky, M. T. (2005). Improving After Action Review (AAR) Practice. *Eighth International Wildland Fire Safety Summit*, (pp. 1-8). Missoula, MT.

(photo included in separate email)

About the Author: O2X Human Performance

O2X Human Performance provides comprehensive, science-backed training and education so tactical athletes can finish their careers as strong as they started. The results driven EAT SWEAT THRIVE curriculum is designed specifically for first responders, law enforcement officers, firefighters, military personnel, and elite organizations. The O2X team is comprised of U.S./UK Special Operations veterans, Olympic and collegiate athletes, and 50+ human performance experts who provide the latest cutting-edge research in each of the primary fields of health and wellness: nutrition, conditioning, sleep, stress management, and resilience. Contact O2X at info@o2x.com or visit o2x.com for more information.