

**IDENTIFYING POTENTIAL STRATEGIES TO OPTIMIZE
RECRUITMENT EFFORTS WITHIN FLORENCE TOWNSHIP,
NEW JERSEY**

EXECUTIVE LEADERSHIP

By: Edward H. Kensler Jr., Chief
Florence Township Fire Department
Florence, New Jersey

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ABSTRACT

A major problem affecting the Florence Township Fire Department is the decreasing number of volunteer firefighters available to respond to the increasing number of emergencies. Therefore, the purpose of this research project was to identify potential strategies to optimize recruitment efforts within Florence Township, New Jersey.

Descriptive research was conducted: (1) to determine the main reasons why people become volunteer firefighters; (2) to identify what the Florence Township Fire Department was currently doing in regards to recruiting volunteer firefighters; (3) to identify what other Fire Companies in Burlington County, New Jersey were doing to recruit volunteer firefighters; and (4) to examine the process that needed to be completed by the prospective volunteer in order to become a volunteer firefighter within Florence Township.

Three separate surveys were conducted, departmental documents were reviewed, and a literature review was conducted during this research project.

The results of this project answered all of the research questions. It identified the main reasons why people become volunteer firefighters and what the Florence Township Fire Department has done in the area of volunteer recruitment. In addition, it identified what other surrounding fire departments were doing to recruit new members. Finally, it found that it took between 28 and 115 days for an individual to complete the application process to become a member of the Florence Township Fire Department.

Several recommendations were made as a result of this project. First, it recommends evaluating the department's current volunteer retention programs. Next, it recommends

establishing a recruitment coordinator or committee within the department. Also, it recommends modifying the application process to reduce the time length needed to become a volunteer firefighter within the department and establishing a mentoring program for all new members. Finally, it recommends continuing to foster working relationships with other Township agencies.

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INTRODUCTION

“The creation and maintenance of a positive image and thus attraction for recruits is done through conscious effort, not left to chance. Simply because a volunteer fire department is honorable, brave, and selfless is not enough to ensure a good image in the public mind” (Perkins, 1996, p.134).

Like many other fire departments throughout New Jersey, the Florence Township Fire Department is concerned with the decreasing number of active volunteer firefighters that are available to respond to the increasing number of emergencies. As a result, the three individual fire companies that make up the Florence Township Fire Department have been trying to recruit additional personnel. Each of these volunteer fire companies has tried various recruitment techniques aimed at attracting new members. Unfortunately, the results have been sporadic. The department, as a whole, does not have a formal recruitment program. Therefore, at times it would appear that the individual companies are in a competition with each other over the limited number of residents who are willing to become volunteer firefighters.

As the current Chief of the Department, I have been charged with the responsibility to look into ways to improve the recruitment efforts of the Florence Township Fire Department without having a drastic impact on the Fire District Budget. Therefore, the purpose of this project is to identify potential strategies to optimize recruitment efforts within Florence Township, New Jersey. To accomplish this project descriptive research was used to answer the following questions:

1. What are the main reasons why people become volunteer firefighters?

2. What is the Florence Township Fire Department currently doing in regards to recruiting volunteer firefighters?
3. What do other Fire Companies in Burlington County, New Jersey do to recruit volunteer firefighters, and how effective is their programs?
4. What process needs to be completed by the prospective volunteer in order to become a volunteer firefighter within Florence Township?

BACKGROUND AND SIGNIFICANCE

“Over the past two decades, the size of the nation’s volunteer fire service has declined” (Smith, 1999, p.7). Furthermore, Bush (1998) stated that, “on a regional level, the northeast has seen the greatest decline in volunteers because it has traditionally been protected by volunteers more than any other region” (p.1). Specifically, Bush (1998) explains, that four states (New York, Pennsylvania, Delaware, and New Jersey) all experienced a major decline in the number of volunteers (p.1). The Florence Township Fire Department does not seem to be an exception to this trend.

Florence Township is approximately 9.65 square miles and is home to approximately 12,000 residents. The Township consists of the towns of Florence and Roebling and is located on the Western side of New Jersey along the Delaware River. It is approximately 10 miles south of the New Jersey State Capital, Trenton.

Several years ago, a Fire District was created in Florence Township. The Fire District is operated by the Board of Fire Commissioners (a five member board whose members are elected by the eligible voters within the Township for three year terms). The Florence Township Fire District currently has contracts with the three volunteer fire companies

that have been established within the boundaries of Florence Township, New Jersey.

These three companies house a total of 4 engines, 1 ladder, 1 tanker truck, 1 brush unit, 1 air cascade unit, and 3 passenger vehicles. In addition, 70 volunteer firefighters, 3 career firefighters, 1 career fire chief, and 1 career fire marshal provide service to the community. These resources collectively make up the Florence Township Fire Department.

Since 1996 the Florence Township Fire Department began filing all company reports from each of the three fire companies into a central filing system. The purpose of this file was to allow the department to begin analyzing the data being recorded. This information included, but was not limited to: overall number of emergencies that the department responds too each year; the types of emergencies that the department responded to; and the number and types of resources that were responding. While this information was helpful, it did not give an accurate representation of the human resources that were responding to any given emergency. In January 1999, the department reporting procedures were changed in an attempt to get a more accurate account of the total number of firefighters that were responding. As a result, the department learned that although the department has 70 volunteer firefighters listed on their rolls, only 36 of these members respond to at least 15% of the total calls. This left members of the department asking, “do we really have an adequate number of volunteer firefighters to provide the necessary services?” In addition, it was asked, “What can be done to recruit new members?”

While conducting this project, the focus was on the idea that “a fire department’s responsibility is to provide the best possible fire suppression and emergency services to the community” (Kuehnert, 1999, p.79).

This research paper relates to using feedback, influencing, and persuasion sections of the Executive Leadership Course, Executive Fire Officer Program, at the National Fire Academy.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

According to Snook (1998) “Three-hundred and sixty plus years ago, when the first volunteer fire departments were organized in the United States, they were formed on the premise of four factors being present: that all volunteer fire companies would be proud, exclusive, influential, and competitive” (p.35). Snook (1998) continues, “to do any less than what is required to meet these four criteria is to shortchange yourself, your department, your volunteers, and your community” (p.35).

“Volunteers comprise 74% of firefighters in the United States” (Norberg, 1999, p.25). Norberg (1999) continues, “communities served by volunteer firefighters depend on them to be their first line of defense for many types of emergencies including fires, emergency medical incidents, natural disasters, hazardous materials incidents, water rescue emergencies, high-angle and confined space emergencies and other general public service calls” (p.25). “According to the National Association of Counties, for every \$1 that a county invests in a volunteer program, it reaps \$10 in benefits” (Ulrich, 1999, p.1). Furthermore, “a report by the National Association of State Foresters in 1995 estimated

that volunteers save localities across the United States \$36.8 billion per year” (Bush, 1998, p.15).

“Since 1970 the demands on emergency service volunteers have risen dramatically” (Glatfelter, 1999 p.24). According to Clay (1998), in the early 70’s, “the public began to demand different kinds of services from the local public fire department, and the volunteers were not exempt from this expectation” (p.17). Since that time, Glatfelter (1999) notes, “our volunteer base is rapidly eroding with turnover as high as 70% in some areas” (p.24). Furthermore, “the estimated number of active volunteer firefighters has dropped nationally from 884,600 in 1983 to 815,500 in 1996” (Bush, 1998, p.i).

“The erosion of the volunteer fire service in America has economic and social effects” (Bush, 1998, p.i). Bush (1998) continues, “the economic ramifications are obvious as towns are forced to hire paid firefighters in place of volunteers” (p.i).

The Department

“The traditional ways of finding, training, and keeping volunteer firefighters and emergency responders is not working very well” (Liebson, 1998, p.12). Murphy (1999) adds, “many of our weaknesses are created by limited thinking and subjective agendas that alienate a fire company” (p.8). In addition, “ruling with an iron hand is likely to produce rapid turnover of volunteers and weak commitment” (McBee, 1994, p.215). Furthermore, “when a fire department is viewed as an old boys club, or carries the redneck image of no women or minorities, even if not valid, many qualified applicants will not consider applying” (Bush, 1998, p.151).

“Another problem facing the volunteer community is the clique syndrome in which a new member may not feel welcome among some of the longtime members” (Smith, 1999, p.7). Smith (1999) also states that, “in such cases, the new member quickly becomes discouraged and may even resign, which could discourage other potential volunteers” (p.7).

McBee (1994) suggests, “in order to lead people, we must learn to serve them” (p.xi). In addition, “an organization that serves its volunteers will thrive” (McBee, 1994, p.24). Perkins (1996) adds, “in most cases, departments that have a good record of retaining members and strong leadership is unlikely to have a serious recruitment problem” (p.131).

“Quality recognition is perhaps the most important short-term incentive an organization can offer” (Glatfelter, 1999, p.24). Ulrich (1999) suggests that, “a weekly column in the newspaper may be one of the most effective ways to reach interested citizens in many communities; the column can highlight volunteer opportunities as well as the activities and accomplishment of current volunteers” (p.1). Savia (2000) states, “one of the things that should distinguish a volunteer department should be a flexible training program that allows members to obtain the training they want and need within the context of their personal schedules” (p.12). Finally, as suggested by Halpin (1998), services need to evaluate how long their membership approval process takes because long delays may create a sense of uncertainty and can cause the new member to wonder if the organization really needs them (p.62).

“The skills and dedication of the people working on recruitment, the creativity that goes into designing the program, and the support – financial, logistical, and verbal –

given to the effort by top management, all play important parts in the success of your departments recruitment efforts” (Armstrong, 1993, p.10). When designing your recruitment messages, Snook (1998) suggests to keep the golden rule of communications in mind: “Keep it simple; make it breathe” (p.42).

When dealing with combination fire departments, “it is important to realize that both career and volunteer firefighters are valuable resources” (McCormick, 1999, p.17). McCormick (1999) further states that, “an environment of mutual respect and cooperation should be nourished between volunteers and the management team” (p.17). Paid staff must understand that it is a volunteer organization and should feel, “I am lucky to have this job, I would volunteer for it” (McBee, 1994, p.214).

Savia (2000) reminds us that, “just because a volunteer fire department and rescue squads are, well, volunteer, doesn’t mean they have to operate less effectively” (p.8). “An organization that has effective personnel management and leadership will be successful” (McCormick, 1999, p.19). Furthermore, “our attitude makes the difference between the group feeling something is going to be difficult or feeling that it will be fun and challenging” (McBee, 1994, p.115). Finally, to be successful, McBee (1994) advises, “never let them forget why they are volunteering” (p.190).

The Volunteers

“The traditional way to ensure a steady flow of good recruits was to satisfy existing members and have them recruit by word of mouth” (Bush, 1998, p.115). Snook (1998) agrees that your best recruitment tool is the current membership since, “approximately 50 percent of all volunteers are recruited by other volunteers” (p.30).

Major issues facing the volunteers identified by Bush (1998) include: the need for two-income families; increased training demands; higher emergency call volume; and increased demands within the department (p.3). Savia (2000) also observed that people who were members of volunteer departments in their youth “often avoid volunteering today because of frustration with the way things are done in a volunteer department, and they don’t necessarily mean fire scene management” (p.8). “Members need to be treated as part of the organization rather than ‘free labor’” (Bush, 1998, p.20). In addition, “workers want to know what is expected of them, and having specific parameters helps” (Savia, 2000, p.8).

“The most important step in recruiting volunteers is to keep them motivated with training, ongoing communication, supervision, evaluation, and recognition” (Ellis, 1996, p.7). “Sound human resource management inspires a desire within employees to improve the service they provide” (McCormick, 1999, p.19). Also, “providing professional enhancement opportunities is also a key factor” (Glatfelter, 1999, p.24). “After all, you can’t expect people to pay for training out of their pockets when they are already giving their time” (Glatfelter, 1999, p.24). McBee (1994) agrees, “training is worth the investment and volunteers want to receive it so they can do a good job” (p.91). Snook (1998) also observed, “departments which seem to experience the most success in recruiting and maintaining volunteers are those requiring and demanding a great deal from their membership, while at the same time providing them with a chance to participate and grow as individuals” (p.28).

Suhr (1997) suggests that, “the best people are those with a lot of integrity, who are respected in the community” (p.47). After all, “the last thing you need is someone

whose reputation may be in question” (Suhr, 1997, p.47). Also, we should remember, “no matter how busy people may be, they are still looking for opportunities to enrich their lives” (McBee, 1994, p.60). “Many people want to make a difference so they join and volunteer in charitable organizations that solve a problem or contribute to a greater good” (Little, 1999, p.10). In addition, “every person has the need to feel important, accomplish important things, and to grow as an individual” (Snook, 1998, p.27). The volunteer fire department, if managed properly, provides for their basic needs (Snook, 1998, p.27).

The Community

“Volunteer fire & rescue organizations have a considerable advantage over many other organizations when it comes to recruitment” (Perkins, 1996, p.130). “What other organization can claim such excitement, personal rewards, and honor associated with being in a volunteer fire department?” (Perkins, 1996, p.130)

To be effective at recruitment in a community, Halpin (1998) suggests that “the department ambassadors visit churches, synagogues, schools, civic groups, businesses, retired citizen groups and your local chamber of commerce, delivering the recruitment message and distributing your one-page informational sheet” (p.66). In addition, “some departments use honorary memberships to solicit media and community attention to their department” (Halpin, 1998, p.66).

Ellis (1996) suggests, “before you can design any volunteer recruitment campaign, you must have an accurate assessment of how the public perceives your organization – is this perception positive or negative?” (p.31). “Quality people want a quality product and a quality product attracts quality people” (Snook, 1998, p.28). Furthermore, “the way a

volunteer acts, speaks and the appearance of the volunteer could have a negative impact on the public perception of the organization” (Snook, 1998,p.41).

Finally, “it is critical that the volunteer fire service believes that it is an integral and valid part of the governmental process and knows that its input is necessary for the community to fulfill its role of meeting citizen needs” (Clay, 1998, p.19). “Exclusion often results in an ‘us verses them’ mind-set within the volunteer organization” (Clay, 1998, p.19). The community must remember that volunteers are not there simply to save money; they are there to add to the organization and to get the community involved (McDowell, 1999, p.71). McDowell (1999) adds, “the bottom line is not saving money, but that the use of volunteers allows the organization to spend money in other areas, such as training, equipment, community projects and the like” (p.71). Ulrich (1999) agrees, “cost savings is an added benefit” (p.9). “Much of your success or failure will be based upon actions on the local level” (Furey, 2000, p.26).

Summary

“Of all the services that managers of small and medium-size communities oversee, few are as challenging as the ones that use volunteer fire and emergency service personnel” (Clay, 1998, p.16). Although, Halpin (1998) suggests that “recruitment would be a non-issue in many departments if they had good volunteer retention programs” (p.62). In addition, Clay (1998) states, “one key principal is that recruitment often depends on the reputation of the organization which can be governed by public opinion and perception” (p.18). In the end, “the important point is to end up with an employee who is an asset to the organization” (Cowardin, 1999, p.17).

“To attract volunteers and keep them, resolve to serve them” (McBee, 1994, p.29). “No matter how it gets accomplished, we can improve the volunteer fire service and, frankly, the fire service as a whole by applying effective and recognized supervision techniques when working with those who serve” (Savia, 2000, p.12). In addition, the recruiting possibilities are numerous for companies who are imaginative and are not afraid to ask for help (Smith, 1999, p.8).

“The loss of the volunteer fire service would be a major social loss for any community” (Bush, 1998, p.15). “By providing support and assistance, the local government manager will foster a stronger and more positive working relationship with the volunteer fire service and will see a welcome improvement in the service being provided by volunteers” (Clay, 1998, p.20).

PROCEDURES

Definition of Terms

Active Member – A member of the department who has completed the minimum training requirements and who currently responds to emergency calls.

Fire Commissioner – An elected officer who is responsible to oversee the operations of the fire department.

Fire District – A political subdivision of a state, a municipality, a county, or other entity (Hogan, 1997, p.104).

First, three different surveys were developed based on information found during a literature review. The first survey was developed for the 69 recruits attending the two

separate Firefighter 1 classes that were being conducted at the Burlington County Fire Academy, Burlington County, New Jersey during the spring of 2001. The second survey developed was distributed to 56 Fire Chiefs within Burlington County, New Jersey. The third and final survey was sent to the 16 newest members of the Florence Township Fire Department. The 16 people that were sent surveys were members of the Florence Township Fire Department for less than two years. While some of the survey questions were “open-ended”, most were “closed-ended”. A copy of all three surveys is included in Appendix A.

While reviewing these surveys some limitations were discovered. First the directions given to the participants were found to be unclear. On many occasions where the participant was asked to circle only one “primary” response to an answer, the participant circled several “primary” reasons. Also, although there was 100% return from the surveys given to the recruit firefighters at the Burlington County Fire Academy, the percentage dropped to 39.29% return of the surveys sent to the chiefs within Burlington County. In addition, the percentage of returns dropped further to only 31.25% of the surveys that were sent to the members of the Florence Township Fire Department who had less than two years of experience.

In addition to conducting surveys, the departmental application package and the departmental policies and procedures, in regards to membership, were reviewed. This included any documentation regarding recruitment efforts. The purpose of this review was to determine what the department currently requires and how long the process takes from the time a prospective candidate receives his/her application package to the time they can start riding the apparatus. In addition, documents were also reviewed to

determine what recruitment programs the individual fire companies were currently conducting. The only real limitation faced during this process was again, the low number of surveys that were returned by the Florence Township Firefighters who received them and documentation concerning recruitment efforts by the fire companies were limited.

Also, all during this project a literature review was being conducted. The major limitation faced was that additional sources of information were not identified until after attending the New Jersey Conference on Volunteerism 2001 that was held on May 3 & 4 in Voorhees, New Jersey. As a result of attending this conference additional resources were identified and ordered. An additional limitation faced was that the ordered materials took three weeks before they were received.

Finally, several attempts were made to meet with the Mayor of Florence Township in order to get his thoughts and opinions concerning the operations of the Florence Township Fire Department and volunteerism within the Township. Unfortunately, this meeting could never be arranged.

RESULTS

Results Research Question #1: What are the main reasons why people become volunteer firefighters?

Bush (1998) identified fifteen leading reasons for becoming a fire or EMS volunteer (p.145). Based on this information, a survey was developed to identify the main reasons why the students in attendance during the Spring 2001 Firefighter 1 classes conducted at the Burlington County Fire Academy, Burlington County, New Jersey and members of the Florence Township Fire Department became volunteer firefighters.

All 69 students that were attending the firefighter 1 classes being given at the Burlington County Fire Academy during the spring of 2001 completed a survey. The top three reasons given by these students for becoming a volunteer firefighter included: (1) a desire to face a new challenge; (2) helping the community; and (3) helping a fellow person in need. The bottom three reasons given by these students were: (1) my neighbor is one; (2) recognition and reward; and (3) to someday become a paid firefighter.

The sixteen members of the Florence Township Fire Department who had less than two years experience within the department were also sent surveys. Five of the sixteen surveys were returned. The top three reasons given by these members for becoming a volunteer firefighter included: (1) a desire to face a new challenge; (2) helping the community; and (3) possibly saving a life. The bottom three reasons given by these members were: (1) my neighbor is one; (2) recognition and reward; and (3) to someday become a paid firefighter.

Results Research Question #2: What is the Florence Township Fire Department currently doing in regards to recruiting volunteer firefighters?

While researching the department documents concerning recruitment, very little information in regards to any formalized recruitment program was found. The primary recruitment method used by all three Fire Companies was determined to be word of mouth. Unfortunately, it was also noted that at times, multiple companies were actually competing with each other while trying to persuade individuals to join their particular station. This competition often resulted in bad mouthing each other in an attempt to justify to an interested candidate why they should join one company over another. It is

also noted that this same type of “competition” was also being used in an attempt to persuade individuals to choose between volunteering for the local Fire Company as opposed to volunteering for the local Emergency Squad and vice versa.

In 1998 the Florence Fire Company #2 attempted a volunteer recruitment drive within a new development located in their response area. Flyers were made up and distributed to each home. Unfortunately, the Fire Company did not receive any responses as a result of this effort.

In 1999, Ralph Mullenax who was serving as Department Chief at the time, attempted to start an Explore Post program within the Township as a way of getting younger individuals interested in the local fire department. Although Chief Mullenax was able to put all the necessary pieces in place for the program, the program was discontinued due to lack of interest.

Finally, it was noted that during two separate events in 2000 and one event so far in 2001 the Florence Township Fire Department sponsored information booths at various community events. Department Applications were available to interest individuals. Two individuals did decide to join the Fire Department as a result.

Results Research Question #3: What are other Fire Companies in Burlington County, New Jersey doing to recruit volunteer firefighters, and how effective are these programs?

A Recruitment survey was developed to determine what other fire companies in Burlington County, New Jersey are doing to recruit new firefighters and how effective their programs are.

In response to question number one (“On a scale of 1-10 how would you rate your departments ability to recruit new members over the past two years?”), the overall average was 3.68. Of the twenty-two departments responding: three departments rated themselves one; four departments rated themselves two; four departments rated themselves three; three departments rated themselves four; five departments rated themselves a five; and three departments rated themselves seven.

In response to question number two (“Does your department have a designated person or committee responsible to recruit new members?”), eight of the twenty-two departments stated that they did have a designated person or committee responsible to recruit new members.

In response to question number three (“Does your department have a written job description for the position of firefighter?”), ten of the twenty-two departments stated that they did have a written job description for the position of firefighter.

In response to question number four asking each department to identify media types used to recruit members, the three most used media types were: (1) signs at the station house; (2) brochures; and (3) print media (i.e. newspapers).

Finally, of the three departments who rated their department’s ability to recruit new members a seven, only one of these departments stated that they had a designated person or committee to recruit new members.

Results Research Question #4: What process needs to be completed by the prospective volunteer in order to become a volunteer firefighter within Florence Township?

A review of the application process revealed that there are several steps that need to be taken to become a volunteer firefighter within the Florence Township Fire Department. First, the prospective candidate must fill out a department application. This application is submitted to the Florence Township Fire District to be reviewed and approved by the Board of Fire Commissioner at a regular scheduled meeting. Next, the application is forwarded to the specific Fire Company that the person would like to respond from. At this time there is no mechanism in place to assure that a volunteer responds to the closest station. Once the person is approved at the company level, the application is sent back to the Board of Fire Commissioners. Next, the individual is given a department purchase order to take a physical. Currently the waiting period between the time the physical is taken to the time the results are returned is about three weeks. Finally, after the individual passes the physical they are issued personnel protective equipment and a pager. The individual is allowed to ride on the apparatus as an observer and allowed to attend other social functions until he/she completes a basic firefighter course.

A review of the membership files for personnel with less than two years' experience with the department showed that the overall application process took an average of 52 days from the time the application was first received by the department until the time the new member received his/her gear. The shortest time was 28 days, while the longest time was 115 days. In addition, 20% of the individuals who started this process within the past two years never completed it.

DISCUSSION

Volunteer firefighters, while valuable resources to any community, are often taken for granted by the very same people who expect courteous and competent service when they call for help. As a result, some organizations have a difficult time recruiting new members because of public perception of the local volunteer fire department. At times, however, the fire service may be its own worst enemy when dealing with issues concerning public perception of volunteer firefighters. The fire service must take a hard look at how the public perceives it. As Ellis (1996) states, “some organizations cannot be successful in volunteer recruitment until they deal with how they are perceived in the community” (p.35). The Florence Township Fire Department needs to continually be conscious of their image within the community and work to create a positive image in order to be successful at recruiting new volunteers.

McDowell (1999) states that while it is important to remember that volunteer recruitment is essential, it should not be the first step in expanding a departments volunteer base (p.70). McDowell (1999) recommends that a department should first consider what motivates someone to volunteer, why the department wants volunteers, and what the department wants these volunteers to do (p.70). First, a program or system that is put in place prior to seeking volunteers can be the difference between success and failure. Furthermore, if a department knows what motivates people to volunteer, they can market their recruitment programs to emphasize those specific items.

A written job description outlining what the department expects from recruits should be made available to the potential volunteer. The job description should outline the volunteers responsibilities or tasks, identify goals, detail training required and time

commitments, and identify the benefits that the volunteer will receive. It must be remembered that “volunteers need to know exactly what they are being asked to do and how much time it will take” (Little, 1999, p.20). More problems are created when individuals volunteer for an organization and quickly leave because either (1) they were not told of the requirements beforehand or (2) because the department did not give them any specific assignments once they became members.

While the overall numbers of volunteer firefighters appear to be decreasing at an alarming rate, there are still many fire departments that never seem to have a problem with recruiting members. McBee (1994) suggests that, “if we are worried about how to get volunteers, we can turn the situation around by asking, ‘what do we need to give?’” (p.98). This requires action on the part of the local fire department and often times means adjusting our methods of doing things. To be successful at recruiting volunteers we must focus on the volunteer. Departments must look to their current members and talk to those members about the positives and negatives of the department. In addition, we need to ask our members, “What can we do for you?” instead of telling them what we expect from them. As Ellis (1996) explains, “ultimately, the best recruitment strategy is to make sure that each and every volunteer has a good experience with your organization” (p.2).

RECOMMENDATIONS

First, the Florence Township Fire Department should evaluate their current retention programs to assure that the current volunteer firefighters are happy to be part of the organization. All efforts to start recruiting additional volunteer firefighters should be postponed until the department’s retention programs are reviewed.

Second, it is recommended that the Florence Township Fire District establish a volunteer recruitment coordinator or committee. This individual or committee should have the responsibility to: (1) develop a volunteer job description for the position of volunteer firefighter; (2) identify potential sources of volunteers within the Township; and (3) identify and select appropriate techniques to communicate the department's message. The book *The Volunteer Recruitment (And Membership Development) Book* should be used as a model.

Next, the department's application process should be reviewed and modified to reduce the time it takes between the submission of an application until the individual is finally accepted into the department. In addition, the department should consider including a departmental interview and a criminal background check as part of its application process. The department should also establish a mentoring program for all new members. Each new member should be assigned a mentor who is familiar with all three fire stations within the Florence Township Fire Department and who is in agreement with the overall goals and visions adopted by the Fire District.

Finally, the department should continue to try to foster working relationships with other agencies within the Township, including its governing body. The book *Building Blocks: Building Community Support for Emergency Service Organizations* should be used as a reference.

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APPENDIX A

RECRUITMENT SURVEYS & RESULTS

**Burlington County Fire Academy
Firefighter 1
Recruitment Survey**

1. Did you have any contact with your local fire department prior to you submitting your application? (Circle one) YES NO

If you answered yes, please give a brief account of the contact and/or experience.

2. Below is a list of the leading reasons why people become a volunteer Firefighter and/or EMT. Circle the "P" for the primary reason why you joined your local department. In addition, circle the "S" to include up to three addition reasons why you joined your department.

- | | | |
|--|---|---|
| • Need for a sense of belonging to something important | P | S |
| • Desire for achievement | P | S |
| • Increased responsibility | P | S |
| • Desire to face a new challenge | P | S |
| • Recognition and reward | P | S |
| • Desire for growth and development | P | S |
| • Need to have fun | P | S |
| • Enjoying one's environment | P | S |
| • Helping the community | P | S |
| • Sense of obligation to the community | P | S |
| • Helping a fellow person in need | P | S |
| • Possibly saving a life | P | S |
| • To someday become a paid firefighter | P | S |
| • My neighbor is one | P | S |
| • I had a fire once and want to help others | P | S |
| • Other _____ | P | S |
| • Other _____ | P | S |
| • Other _____ | P | S |
| • Other _____ | P | S |

(Continue on reverse side)

3. During your application process did you complete any of the following:
(Check all that apply)

<input type="checkbox"/> department interview	<input type="checkbox"/> driving background check
<input type="checkbox"/> medical exam	<input type="checkbox"/> criminal background check
<input type="checkbox"/> drug screening	<input type="checkbox"/> immigration status check
<input type="checkbox"/> physical agility test	<input type="checkbox"/> sign a commitment agreement
<input type="checkbox"/> written exam	

4. Once you were accepted into the department did you receive any of the following:
(Check all that apply)

assigned a mentor
 allowed to get involved in simple tasks on the fire ground
 allowed to ride initially as an observer
 issued a pager in order to be notified of alarms
 allowed to attend and/or be invited to social functions

Thank you for taking you time in filling out this survey. Please feel free to make any additional comments that you feel could be helpful. Include your name and address if you would like to receive a copy of the survey results.

**Burlington County Fire Academy
Firefighter 1
Recruitment Survey (RESULTS)**

1. Did you have any contact with your local fire department prior to you submitting your application? (Circle one) YES-47 NO-22

2. Below is a list of the leading reasons why people become a volunteer Firefighter and/or EMT. Circle the "P" for the primary reason why you joined your local department. In addition, circle the "S" to include up to three addition reasons why you joined your department.

PRIMARY REASONS CHOSEN:

• Need for a sense of belonging to something important	P	10
• Desire for achievement	P	13
• Increased responsibility	P	10
• Desire to face a new challenge	P	25
• Recognition and reward	P	4
• Desire for growth and development	P	15
• Need to have fun	P	8
• Enjoying one's environment	P	10
• Helping the community	P	22
• Sense of obligation to the community	P	16
• Helping a fellow person in need	P	17
• Possibly saving a life	P	12
• To someday become a paid firefighter	P	7
• My neighbor is one	P	4
• I had a fire once and want to help others	P	15
• Make Friends _____	P	1
• Family Tradition _____	P	5
• Looks good on college application _____	P	2
• Childhood Dream _____	P	1
• Honor _____	P	1

SECONDARY REASONS CHOSEN:

• Need for a sense of belonging to something important	S	15
• Desire for achievement	S	11
• Increased responsibility	S	11
• Desire to face a new challenge	S	23
• Recognition and reward	S	11
• Desire for growth and development	S	11

• Need to have fun	S	14
• Enjoying one's environment	S	7
• Helping the community	S	22
• Sense of obligation to the community	S	11
• Helping a fellow person in need	S	25
• Possibly saving a life	S	19
• To someday become a paid firefighter	S	15
• My neighbor is one	S	9
• I had a fire once and want to help others	S	8
• Family Tradition_____	S	1
• Making Friends_____	S	1

3. During your application process did you complete any of the following:
(Check all that apply)

department interview	39
medical exam	55
drug screening	17
physical agility test	26
written exam	11
driving background check	33
criminal background check	48
immigration	7
sign a commitment agreement	28

4. Once you were accepted into the department did your receive any of the following:
(Check all that apply)

assigned a mentor	17
allowed to get involved in simple tasks on the fire ground	65
allowed to ride initially as an observer	52
issued a pager in order to be notified of alarms	67
allowed to attend and/or be invited to social functions	66

Burlington County Fire Chief Firefighter Recruitment Survey

1. On a scale of 1-10 how would you rate your department's ability to recruit new members over the past two years?

(very poor) 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 (very good)

2. Does your department have a designated person or committee responsible to recruitment new members? (Circle One)

YES NO

3. Does you department have a written Job Descriptions for the position of Volunteer Firefighter? (Circle One)

YES NO

4. Does your department use any of the following media types as a way to recruit new members? (Circle the "P" for the primary media type used. In addition, circle the "S" to include any other media type being used.)

- | | | |
|---------------------------------|---|---|
| • Television/Cable | P | S |
| • Radio | P | S |
| • Print Media (i.e. newspapers) | P | S |
| • Videotapes and/or slide shows | P | S |
| • Brochures | P | S |
| • Direct Mailings | P | S |
| • Posters | P | S |
| • Signs at Station Houses | P | S |
| • Advertisements on Apparatus | P | S |
| • Movie Theaters | P | S |
| • World Wide Web | P | S |
| • Other _____ | P | S |
| • Other _____ | P | S |
| • Other _____ | P | S |

(Continue on reverse side)

5. During your application process do you require any of the following? (Check all that apply)

- | | |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> department interview | <input type="checkbox"/> driving background check |
| <input type="checkbox"/> medical exam | <input type="checkbox"/> criminal background check |
| <input type="checkbox"/> drug screening | <input type="checkbox"/> immigration status check |
| <input type="checkbox"/> physical agility test | <input type="checkbox"/> sign a commitment agreement |
| <input type="checkbox"/> written exam | |

6. Once a member is accepted into your department do you: (Check all that apply)

- assigned a mentor to the new member
- allow the member to get involved in simple tasks on the fire ground
- allow the member to ride initially as an observer
- issued the member a pager in order to be notified of alarms
- allow the member to attend and/or be invited to social functions

Thank you for taking you time in filling out this survey. Please feel free to make any additional comments that you feel could be helpful. Include your name and address if you would like to receive a copy of the final report.

**Burlington County Fire Chief
Firefighter
Recruitment Survey (RESULTS)**

1. On a scale of 1-10 how would you rate your department's ability to recruit new members over the past two years?

1-3 2-4 3-4 4-3 5-5 6-0 7-3 8-0 9-0 10-0

2. Does your department have a designated person or committee responsible to recruitment new members?

YES-8 NO-14

3. Does you department have a written Job Descriptions for the position of Volunteer Firefighter?

YES-10 NO-12

4. Does your department use any of the following media types as a way to recruit new members? (Circle the "P" for the primary media type used. In addition, circle the "S" to include any other media type being used.)

PRIMARY REASONS CHOOSEN:

- | | |
|---------------------------------|-----|
| • Television/Cable | P 1 |
| • Radio | P |
| • Print Media (i.e. newspapers) | P 3 |
| • Videotapes and/or slide shows | P |
| • Brochures | P 4 |
| • Direct Mailings | P 3 |
| • Posters | P 1 |
| • Signs at Station Houses | P 8 |
| • Advertisements on Apparatus | P |
| • Movie Theaters | P |
| • World Wide Web | P 2 |
| • Word of Mouth_____ | P 2 |
| • Other_____ | P |
| • Other_____ | P |

SECONDARY REASONS CHOSEN:

- Television/Cable S 2
- Radio S
- Print Media (i.e. newspapers) S 2
- Videotapes and/or slide shows S
- Brochures S 1
- Direct Mailings S 3
- Posters S 1
- Signs at Station Houses S 4
- Advertisements on Apparatus S
- Movie Theaters S
- World Wide Web S 1
- State Wide Campaign_____ S 1
- Word of Mouth_____ S 2
- Township functions_____ S 3

5. During your application process do you require any of the following? (Check all that apply)

department interview	14
medical exam	19
drug screening	6
physical agility test	5
written exam	1
driving background check	14
criminal background check	18
immigration status check	0
sign a commitment agreement	1

6. Once a member is accepted into your department do you: (Check all that apply)

assigned a mentor to the new member	10
allow the member to get involved in simple tasks on the fire ground	19
allow the member to ride initially as an observer	20
issued the member a pager in order to be notified of alarms	22
allow the member to attend and/or be invited to social functions	22

Florence Twp. Fire Department Firefighter Recruitment Survey

1. Did you have any contact with your local fire department prior to you submitting your application? (Circle one) YES NO

If you answered yes, please give a brief account of the contact and/or experience.

2. Below is a list of the leading reasons why people become a volunteer Firefighter and/or EMT. Circle the "P" for the primary reason why you joined your local department. In addition, circle the "S" to include up to three addition reasons why you joined your department.

- | | | |
|--|---|---|
| • Need for a sense of belonging to something important | P | S |
| • Desire for achievement | P | S |
| • Increased responsibility | P | S |
| • Desire to face a new challenge | P | S |
| • Recognition and reward | P | S |
| • Desire for growth and development | P | S |
| • Need to have fun | P | S |
| • Enjoying one's environment | P | S |
| • Helping the community | P | S |
| • Sense of obligation to the community | P | S |
| • Helping a fellow person in need | P | S |
| • Possibly saving a life | P | S |
| • To someday become a paid firefighter | P | S |
| • My neighbor is one | P | S |
| • I had a fire once and want to help others | P | S |
| • Other _____ | P | S |
| • Other _____ | P | S |
| • Other _____ | P | S |
| • Other _____ | P | S |

(Continue on reverse side)

3. On the scale of 0 to 5 where 0 is “not at all satisfied” and 5 is extremely satisfied” please rate your satisfaction with the following elements of your volunteer experience by circling the number from 0 to 5. The higher the number, the more satisfied you are with the experience.

- Overall Satisfaction with your experience so far

0 1 2 3 4 5

- Amount of follow-up and support you are receiving from your company officers.

0 1 2 3 4 5

- Degree to which everything you need to complete the task is provided (PPE, information, training)

0 1 2 3 4 5

- Degree to which commitments made to you were kept

0 1 2 3 4 5

- Did you experience any problems or difficulties that we need to address in order to make your future volunteer experience better? (Please describe. Attach additional page if needed.)

Thank you for taking time to fill out this survey. Please feel free to make any additional comments that you feel could be helpful. Include your name and address if you would like to receive a copy of the final report.

Florence Twp. Fire Department Firefighter Recruitment Survey (RESULTS)

1. Did you have any contact with your local fire department prior to you submitting your application? (Circle one) YES -3 NO -2
2. Below is a list of the leading reasons why people become a volunteer Firefighter and/or EMT. Circle the "P" for the primary reason why you joined your local department. In addition, circle the "S" to include up to three addition reasons why you joined your department.

PRIMARY REASONS CHOSEN:

- Need for a sense of belonging to something important P 1
- Desire for achievement P 3
- Increased responsibility P 1
- Desire to face a new challenge P 3
- Recognition and reward P
- Desire for growth and development P 3
- Need to have fun P
- Enjoying one's environment P 1
- Helping the community P 3
- Sense of obligation to the community P 1
- Helping a fellow person in need P 2
- Possibly saving a life P 3
- To someday become a paid firefighter P
- My neighbor is one P
- I had a fire once and want to help others P 1
- Relatives are firefighters_____ P 1

SECONDARY REASONS CHOSEN:

- Need for a sense of belonging to something important S
- Desire for achievement S
- Increased responsibility S 1
- Desire to face a new challenge S 1
- Recognition and reward S 1
- Desire for growth and development S
- Need to have fun S 1
- Enjoying one's environment S
- Helping the community S 2
- Sense of obligation to the community S
- Helping a fellow person in need S 1

- Possibly saving a life S
- To someday become a paid firefighter S 1
- My neighbor is one S 1
- I had a fire once and want to help others S
- Avoid Jury Duty S 1
- Always wanted to do it S 1

3. On the scale of 0 to 5 where 0 is “not at all satisfied” and 5 is extremely satisfied” please rate your satisfaction with the following elements of your volunteer experience by circling the number from 0 to 5. The higher the number, the more satisfied you are with the experience.

- Overall Satisfaction with your experience so far

0-0 1-0 2-0 3-0 4-2 5-3

- Amount of follow-up and support you are receiving from your company officers.

0-0 1-1 2-0 3-0 4-2 5-2

- Degree to which everything you need to complete the task is provided (PPE, information, training)

0-0 1-0 2-0 3-1 4-1 5-3

- Degree to which commitments made to you were kept

0-0 1-0 2-1 3-1 4-1 5-2