

LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM ANALYSIS
Perceptions and Needs Assessment in the Sugar Land Fire Department

Executive Leadership

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ABSTRACT

City of Sugar Land is enjoying unprecedented growth that creates challenges for providing fire and rescue service. A sixth fire station will open next year, increasing department staffing to 100. To manage this growth and prepare firefighters for greater responsibilities, the Fire Department needs better-prepared leaders. The problem is the Sugar Land Fire Department had not identified the leadership characteristics that employees wanted and managers needed. The research attempted to discover which leadership traits officer candidates and senior managers thought were important, the research questions were:

1. What are leadership skills that are important to company officer candidates?
2. What are the important leadership skills necessary in company officers from a staff perspective?
3. Are the perspectives different?
4. What are the important elements in a leadership-training program that will address both student needs and organizational goals?

This was an action and an evaluative research. The answers would help prioritize leadership development program offerings so both management perspective and staff needs were included.

Results showed that management and officer candidate perspectives differed somewhat. Officer candidates viewed the following traits as most important:

1. Empowering.

2. and 3. Credible and ambitious.
4. Optimistic.
5. Considerate.

There was agreement among management staff that the “considerate” characteristic was most important. This was followed by “credibility” and “optimistic”, then “ambitious” and “empowering”. At the other extreme, the least important skills for from the line perspective were “thrifty, “entertaining” and “enterprising”. Staff members had similar responses, albeit in slightly different order.

The officer candidate responses did not reach numbers necessary for statistical analysis. The author recommends the following considerations in designing a leadership program:

1. Start with self-assessments for employees enrolled in the program.
2. Use job analysis to help determine topics.
3. Include leadership training at every level of the department.
4. Use both classroom and experiential learning.
5. The topics should be immediately applicable.
6. The program should receive on-going evaluation.

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INTRODUCTION

City of Sugar Land is enjoying unprecedented growth. This growth began in the early 1980s, but is anticipated to continue for the next 15 years. While this growth is generally considered a good thing for the community, it does offer challenges for providing service.

The fire department's mission is:

The Sugar Land Fire Department is dedicated to enhancing the quality of life in our community by effective and efficient public safety education, fire prevention, fire fighting, medical emergency response and responding to the needs of our customers with a professional workforce that demonstrates compassion, integrity and respect.

To live up to the promise of this statement the Department must have a professional workforce whose focus is to satisfy customers' needs and expectations. The workforce must be managed and led by effective and efficient leaders. These leaders should model and reinforce the compassion, integrity and respect that are consistent with the Department's mission. To develop leaders for the future, the Department intends to implement a leadership training and development program. But on what specific leadership traits should a leadership development program be focused? The problem is the Sugar Land Fire Department currently does not have a comprehensive way of identifying the leadership needs and focus of a leadership development program. If a leadership development program is to be successful, it must be related to organizational goals and employee needs. Without such a focus, it is not possible to ensure that the commitment to quality service will be nurtured throughout the department.

The purpose of this research is to discover which leadership traits officer candidates and senior managers think are the most important. Just as importantly, the

author attempted to discover if the collective perspectives of current management staff is similar or different than those of line personnel. In order for any development program to be truly successful, it would be critically important that the goals of the students and the goals as understood by managers are closely aligned. Once these are known, the author can begin to consider both organizational goals (management perspective) and staff needs (officer candidate input) in developing a program.

The research questions are as follows:

1. What are leadership skills that are important to company officer candidates?
2. What are the important leadership skills necessary in company officers from a staff perspective?
3. Are the perspectives different?
4. What are the important elements in a leadership-training program that will address both student needs and organizational goals?

The author used the evaluative and action research methods to answer these research questions. The evaluation will be done using two distinct formats. First, a written survey was produced and administered to the most recent Lieutenant candidates. Second, a focus group of all of the fire department's management staff was convened to discuss the same topics posed in the written survey. Finally, the information derived from these two methods were compared and contrasted. Once this is done, the author intends to use the information to develop a more focused leadership development curriculum.

BACKGROUND AND SIGNIFICANCE

The Sugar Land Fire Department serves the incorporated city of Sugar Land, Texas. It also provides fire and emergency medical services by service contracts to its unincorporated Extra-Territorial Jurisdictions (ETJ). The city is located 20 miles southwest of downtown Houston. The city is at the intersection of several major regional highways. One of these is Highway 59, which will one day become the primary transportation route to Houston from enterprise zones on the border between Mexico and the U.S. Current city population is approximately 64,000. When the ETJ population is included, the fire department serves over 105,000 citizens. City planning staff anticipated that the city's ultimate build-out population to be 173,000 (Long Range Facility Master Plan, 1998). This build-out estimate may be achieved in as early as 15 years from now.

Originally a town whose primary employer is the Imperial Sugar Refinery, the city has become much more economically diverse in recent years. Currently the city has among its major employers Fluor Daniel, Schlumberger, Unocal, Prudential Insurance, Baker Hughes and Fort Bend Independent School District (Fort Bend Chamber of Commerce, 2000). These employers and others have helped the city evolve from a bedroom community whose primary function was to provide housing and transportation to Houston's economy, to a more complex edge city. In 1998 the city doubled in size when it annexed several neighboring ETJ districts. The city also operates the fourth largest airport in the Houston metropolitan area. This airport's development has been the pride of the City's leaders and figures prominently as an engine in the future economic growth of the City. Equally important to the long-term health of the Sugar Land

community is the University of Houston Sugar Land campus. This campus will become operational in the summer of 2002, providing further support to growth into the future. Because of this economic diversity, the recent downturn in the national economy did not have a negative effect on retail sales and property taxes. Similarly, city finance staff has reported only minor negative fiscal impact due to regional and national events such as the proposed merger between Compaq computers and Hewlett Packard, the collapse of Enron and the tragedies of September 11.

Since becoming a paid professional fire department in 1981, the Sugar Land Fire Department has grown to have five fire stations with 75 line personnel and 13 administrative, public education, training and fire prevention staff. The fifth station opened in August of 2001. This was the first station to open since 1994. Between 1994 and now emergency call volumes for the department increased over 170%. Within the next 15 months, another station will open. Once station six opens, department staffing will increase to 100 overall. This represents a departmental resource growth of over 35% in just over three years. Recent national focus on preparing better trained and equipped first responders, as well as change the scope of the department's mission, will also no doubt influence the growth of the department.

In 2001 the city reviewed and updated the City's goals during a strategic planning process. This process resulted in identifying five major city goals. These goals are:

- A Well Planned Community
- Safest City in Area
- Strong Local Economy
- Responsible Local Government

- Mobility for People

Although the link between the goal of safest city in area and the services provided by the fire department is obvious, there are other significant but less direct links as well. For example, in order to demonstrate responsible local government, the fire department must do its share in providing fiscal due diligence.

The challenges related to rapid growth and meeting City Council goals are numerous. Chief among these are the early identification and development of future officers and leaders. Unless economic and emergency demand trends taper and flatten, the City will likely need to increase the numbers and quality of firefighters well into the foreseeable future. As the department grows, it will also require more and better-prepared officers to lead it. In order to maintain a high quality service, these firefighters must be led “on the front lines” by competent, professional and respected officers. Beyond the daily demands of leading and operating at the station level, the department will need visionary leaders that can continue to innovate and produce results for the City. In this respect particularly, the research directly relates to the succession and replacement module of the Executive Fire Officer Executive Leadership course.

The Department published a career development guide in the fall of 1999. This guide was conceived by the Assistant Chief of Training to serve as a general blueprint for all personnel interested in progressing within the fire department. This guide provided some focus for potential officers as to the type of technical and educational qualifications might be important at each level of the fire department organization. However, it did not contemplate the more elusive topic of leadership. While much has been written about why leadership is important at all levels of the organization, the department has yet

provided comprehensive guidance to its personnel relative to what leadership is and is not. Nor has the department initiated a comprehensive program to help hone leadership traits in its officer pool.

Before such a development program can be designed, there must first be some study of where the department stands currently. Without the research conducted in this paper, leadership training will happen in a haphazard fashion, with no attention to goals or to buy-in from the intended audience.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Developing good leaders not only ensures that the goals and objectives of the department are carried out effectively, but that the vision that the author holds for a model fire department can continue to manifest even when top managers change. Maxwell (1998) wrote the following about leaving a legacy, “The most stable companies have strong leaders at every level of the organization. The only way to develop such widespread leadership is to make developing leaders a part of your culture.” (p. 219) This statement certainly supports the author’s personal viewpoint.

Why is the topic of leadership particularly relevant now? In Kotter’s book (1988) the author writes:

Figuring out the right thing to do in an environment of uncertainty caused by intense competitive activity, and then getting others, often many others, to accept a new way of doing things demands skills and approaches that most managers simply did not need in the relatively calm 1950s, 1960s, and early 1970s. It demands something more than technical expertise, administrative ability, and traditional (especially bureaucratic)

management. Operating in the new environment also requires leadership (p. 9). Kotter clearly believed that managerial controls that were sufficient in periods of relative stability are not adequate for the challenges of today.

Burris (2001) believes that although some organizational situations require a change in personnel, most require organizational transformation by exercising leadership (p. 107). In his article, Sargent (2001) states that, "The team's effectiveness, safety, and efficiency depend on many factors, the most important of which is leadership." By not providing training, Sargent believes "many departments are setting their officers up for failure..." (p. 51). Cleveland (1990) believes that leadership training should begin even before a firefighter is promoted, so that "those we are preparing for future leadership positions are ready to serve when the time comes for them to assume these positions." (p. 19). These writings further suggests that leadership development, above all else, should be the focus for a fire department that wishes to evolve and grow as the rest of the community grows.

Carter (1995) wrote, "A leader charged with planning the future operations must have an idea of where it is he wishes to go prior to beginning his trip to the future." (p. 28). In his summary, Phillips (1994) implored that, "fire service organizations must include leadership training and assessment I future promotional processes. One sure way to have fire service personnel participate in leadership training is to include the subject on promotional testing study guides and to require completion of leadership training as a prerequisite for promotional qualification." (p. 28). Green (1997) observed that, "The Officer Development program is not the final step in officer preparation, but is a major step in providing the framework for improving the efficiency, effectiveness, and

capabilities of officers in the Hampton Division of Fire and Rescue.” (p. 21). Mr. Van der Broeck (1989) wrote in his applied research project that, “many of our company officers are highly trained in fire-ground management, but lack training and the understanding in the area of leadership.” (p. 11). These readings corroborate the idea that leadership training and development programs have been pondered and found important in other fire service organizations. The evidence also supports the notion that if the department wanted leaders, it must identify leaders, train leaders and give them opportunities to lead.

To begin to develop a leadership-training program, it was particularly important to have some idea of what the leadership needs are in the department currently. In order to design a survey to answer the research questions, it was necessary to find literature that gave succinct and descriptive characteristics of leadership. These descriptions should be simple enough to generate quick responses by those surveyed, yet distinct enough that results can point toward priorities in leadership development topics. In other words, what are the specific qualities that are under the umbrella of “leadership”? According to Clint Smoke (2001) in selecting company officers, the fire department should consider candidates based on a set of qualities that include vision, professional development, interpersonal skills, communication skills and community involvement. Of these qualities, at least three, vision, interpersonal skills and communication skills are often mentioned as leadership characteristics.

But what does leadership really mean? According to Kotter (1988):

The word “leadership” is used in two basic ways in everyday

conversation: (1) to refer to the process of moving a group (or groups) of

people in some direction through (mostly) non-coercive means, and (2) to refer to people who are in roles where leadership (the first definition) is expected.

Good leadership moves people in a direction that is genuinely in their real long-term best interests. It does not march people off a cliff. It does not waste their scarce resources. It does not build up the dark side of their human nature (p. 16).

How have others attempted to define leadership? Maxwell (1998) describes the following “21 laws” that leaders must follow as a way to categorize the elements of leadership:

1. The law of the lid: leadership ability determines a person’s level of effectiveness
2. The law of influence: the true measure of leadership is influence—nothing more, nothing less.
3. The law of process: leadership develops daily, not in a day.
4. The law of navigation: Anyone can steer the ship, but it takes a leader to chart the course.
5. The law of E.F. Hutton, when the real leader speaks, people listen.
6. The law of solid ground, trust is the foundation of leadership.
7. The law of respect, people naturally follow leaders stronger than themselves.
8. The law of intuition, leaders evaluate everything with a leadership bias.

9. The law of magnetism, who you are is who you attract.
10. The law of connection, leaders touch a heart before they ask for a hand.
11. The law of the inner circle, a leader's potential is determined by those closest to him.
12. The law of empowerment, only secure leaders give power to others.
13. The law of production, it takes a leader to raise up a leader.
14. People buy into the leader, then the vision.
15. The law of victory, leaders find a way for the team to win.
16. The law of the big Mo, momentum is the leader's best friend.
17. The law of priorities, leaders understand that activity is not necessarily accomplishment.
18. The law of sacrifice, a leader must give up to go up.
19. The law of timing, when to lead is as important as what to do and where to go.
20. The law of explosive growth, to add growth, lead followers-to multiply, lead leaders.
21. The law of legacy, a leader's lasting value is measured by succession. (p. 3-9)

Kotter (1988, p. 30) wrote that requirements for effective leadership include such factors as industry and organizational knowledge, relationships in the firm and industry, reputation and track record, ability and skills, personal values and motivation. What the

author found, however, is that in today's firms managers have "narrow/specialized knowledge of firm, functions, and industry, good working relationships with (at best) the few sub-groups of people with which they have worked, narrow track records that are credible to some but not to many others, mixed abilities, not uniformly strong at both the intellectual and inter-personal levels, not uniformly high in integrity, some desire to lead, considerable desire to control." (p. 62).

Kidd (2001) wrote that leaders should develop a set of good habits, which include:

1. Administrative habits, like using a planning calendar, finishing paperwork promptly and taking notes,
2. Good leadership habits, such as be a part of the crew, spend time on the floor, meet routinely and addressing problems promptly,
3. Good training habits, like setting team goals, demand high performance, and critiquing actions, and
4. Command habits, such as taking time to understand the scope of the emergency and making appropriate decisions. (P. 55)

Kidd grouped the skills necessary for officer positions in four areas. While this grouping was convenient and perhaps adequate in identifying potential candidates, it is probably not sufficiently detailed to offer much guidance in selecting leadership-training topics. The article seem to also suggest that it was not enough just to learn about leadership concepts, but that to be effective, leaders must practice what they learn and apply these concepts until they become habitual and predictable.

Raul Angulo (2001) writes that the U.S. Army defined leaders by how well officers demonstrate:

- Versatility
- Adaptability to change
- Professionalism
- Exemplary ethical conduct
- Technical and tactical proficiency
- Excellent communication skills
- The ability to build cohesive teams
- Analytical problem-solving skills
- The willingness to seize initiative and the independence
- Confidence to operate with minimum guidance
- The insight and foresight of a visionary (p. 101).

Jones (1986) wrote in his review of Dr. Warren Bennis' research that there are only four competencies in successful leadership, these are: management of attention, management of trust, management of meaning and management of self. (p. 17).

Although this research was relevant and interesting, it was too vague to be applicable in designing a survey or a curriculum of study.

In creating a new training and development curriculum, the need to adapt to the learning styles of students should not be overlooked. Janing (2001) proposed that there is consensus among educators that experiential learning is the most effective for adult learners. She states, "Learning results from the integration of concrete emotional experiences and the cognitive processes of analysis and understanding (p. 77). Further in

this article, the author argues that a learning styles inventory should be used to find out which learning styles the majority of the targeted students preferred. In this way the method of delivery can be matched to the preferred style of the students so that the impact of the lesson can be maximized. On the other hand, Buzzotta and Lefton (1997) believed that a job profile be developed for key positions, which will then lead to an understanding of the competencies necessary for the positions (p.14). The Sugar Land Fire Department job descriptions speak mostly to technical skills needed, therefore the author rejected them as sources to generate leadership characteristics.

Angulo (2001) states when he teaches leadership classes, he finds that firefighters want leaders that:

1. Lead by example, does what is said, say what he does.
2. Motivate others to want to follow.
3. Demonstrate competence by being knowledgeable and experienced.
4. Create trusting atmosphere to encourage others. (p. 101-102)

Kirkpatrick (1993) found that some trainees had poor attitudes toward training.

He believed these attitudes existed because:

- A poor attitude toward the job and toward the company in general.
- A training schedule that may be inconvenient for them or may require them to take training on their own time.
- Subject content that has been determined by training and personnel people or even by top management instead of by supervisors and middle management people.

- The instructor. Perhaps a young college graduate is teaching mature, experienced supervisors how to do the job better, or an outside psychologist has been called in to act as a teacher. The instructor may lack the respect of the supervisors who will be attending the meeting.
- A reaction to what they have heard about the training program. Perhaps they have been given insufficient information on the purpose of the training program and how it will help them, and they view the program as a complete waste of time and effort (p. 38).

As the result of this research evolves into a leadership development program, the program designer should consider all of these issues.

PROCEDURES

When considering the audience for the survey, the author considered what Kirpatrick (1993) wrote about who should be consulted for this research, “Who determines the needs and settings: upper level managers, staff personnel, supervisors themselves, subordinates of supervisors, outsiders.”(p.41). Further lending validity to getting feedback using two different groups was this quote from the same author, “Information from several of these sources would be better than the information from any one alone.” “In addition to soliciting the opinions of the supervisors themselves, it is a good idea to ask upper level managers for their opinions and recommendations on the needs of the supervisors who report to them.”(p.42)

In the Development Planning Guide offered by Campbell (1998), the list of leadership characteristics seemed to be sufficiently comprehensive to be used as the basis

for a survey. Therefore, a survey form using descriptions that corresponded to the Campbell leadership index scales was developed (Appendix I & II).

The leadership characteristics are described as follows:

1. Ambitious: A sense of drive. a desire for forward progress. Able to take charge.
2. Daring: Likes to try new activities and challenges the status quo. Encourages out of the box thinking, takes risks.
3. Dynamic: Shows enthusiasm and positive energy. Can inspire people.
4. Enterprising: Able to handle new challenges and develop new opportunities.
5. Experience: Have broad understanding of different functions in the organization.
6. Farsighted: Able to focus on strategic issues and has vision.
7. Original: Offer unique perspectives and new ideas.
8. Persuasive: Articulate, convincing and influential.
9. Energy: High level of physical or mental activity or high spirit, persistent.
10. Affection: Care about people, trusting and express feelings.
11. Considerate: Sensitive to needs and feelings of others, willing to communicate and coach others.
12. Empowering: Help others achieve higher levels of performance. Willing to share credit.
13. Entertaining: Have good sense of humor and is outgoing.
14. Friendly: Pleasant to be around and relates well to others.

15. Credible: Trustworthy and believable. Treats others fairly. Sets high standards of integrity.
16. Organized: Methodical and orderly.
17. Productive: Persistent and gets things done.
18. Thrifty: Protects organizational resources. Understands budgets and finance.
19. Calm: Unhurried and show grace under pressure. Remains objective.
20. Flexible: Can handle changes and ambiguity well.
21. Optimistic: Confident outlook and rebound quickly from setbacks.
22. Trusting: Believe in the goodness of others. Builds trust (p. 6-28).

The author chose two slightly different ways to ask the questions for the two target groups. The first survey asked respondents to rank their choices; the second survey proposed that respondents selected the top five and bottom five skills necessary for a successful leader as a starting point for discussion. The author thought that given a focus group environment, having to select and discuss from the entire list might prove overwhelming.

Once the format of the survey instruments were selected, the author sent the surveys to all 19 candidates that participated in the most recent Lieutenant assessment. This group had presumably the greatest interest in becoming officers, therefore should also have the most to gain in any research outcome. The author intends to receive the results, average the scores from the responses and rank the leadership characteristics based on average score.

The second survey was distributed during a focus group session attended by all members of management staff. This group included assistant chiefs, battalion chiefs and the department's administrative assistant. This group represented the senior decision makers in the department. The author chose this group because they have the more extensive knowledge of the roles and responsibilities of station lieutenants and the goals and objectives for the department. The focus group activity began with participants filling out a survey, and then the author asked for specific feedback about the traits the Department's next generation of leaders should possess. Since all key staff members participated, the degree of agreement within the group should provide some correlative measure of validity.

The results gathered from these two groups are then compared and contrasted to answer research question three. If enough officer candidates return the surveys, the author intends to analyze the responses to see if the answers are statistically significant.

To answer question four, the author will draw on literature review.

There are limitations to using these methods to gather information. One observation is that the sample size for both surveys and focus group was non-random and fairly small. By limiting the number of respondents, the survey results may only represent a minority view. Another assumption the author made is that the recent lieutenant candidates would be most interested in leadership training and development. It is very possible that others in the department are just as interested, but did not participate in the promotional process. Another important consideration is that there was no incentive or disincentive built in to the survey process and the responses were anonymous. There was no way to ensure that the number of lieutenant candidate

responses will be adequate to provide a statically significant result. The focus group method was valuable as a measure of degree of consensus and the attitudes among key staff members, but was difficult to statistically quantify otherwise.

RESULTS

Of the 19 lieutenants asked to participate in the survey, only nine returned completed surveys. Of those that did return them, one did not follow the instructions. This respondent used the same rank multiple times. Since including this in the final results would skew the responses of others, the author was forced to discard this response.

Research question number one asks:

What are leadership skills that are important to company officer candidates?

The answer appears to be, averaged and in rank order:

1. Empowering.
2. and 3. Credible and ambitious.
4. Optimistic.
5. Considerate.
6. Affectionate.
7. Trusting.
8. Dynamic.
9. and 10. Flexible and productive.
11. Organized.
12. Energetic.
13. Experienced.

14. Daring.
15. Friendly.
16. Original.
17. Persuasive.
18. Farsighted.
19. Calm.
20. Enterprising
21. Entertaining.
22. Thrifty.

The most important characteristic appears to be “empowering”, receiving an average rank of 5. The least important leadership characteristic received an average score of 20.38, that characteristic was “thrifty”.

Research question two was:

What are the important leadership skills necessary in company officers from a staff perspective?

There was greatest agreement among management staff that the “considerate” characteristic was most important. All seven staff selected this as one of their top five. The “credibility” of the leader was also important with four votes. Following that “optimistic”, “ambitious” and “empowering” received the same value of three votes each. At the other extreme, the least important skills for company officers were “entertaining” and “enterprising”, both receiving 6 of 7 votes. This was followed by “thrifty” with 5 votes. Staff members answered the survey question specifically as it related to line

officers only. There were several characteristics that received votes both as most important and as least important. Therefore the votes cancelled each other out.

A few staff members offered that their answers would have been different for if the question related to the leadership skills of management staff. One commented that the skills he thought important was different depending on which officer he was thinking about. He went on to say that he tended to focus on one or two individual officers when he answered the question.

Another common comment was that the staff had some trouble distinguishing the characteristics from one another based on the descriptions given. Another staff opined that all of the leadership characteristics were important in an organization. He went on to say that “the Department could be too one-dimensional if we all had the same skill sets.”

Research question three, Are the perspectives different? Can be answered by the following observations:

Officer candidates rated “empowering” as first, and “credible” nearly as highly; in contrast, staff thought that being “considerate” was the most important leadership skill needed. “Credibility” ranked second. There is more agreement when the “skills least needed” for leadership success. Both management and line employees believed that “entertaining”, “enterprising” and “thrifty” were not that important for officers.

There was no direct action research conducted to attempt to answer research question four. The author will address that question in greater detail in the recommendation section.

DISCUSSION

The results revealed certain interesting patterns. First, it was easier for both groups to agree on the leadership characteristics successful officers least needed. It was much more difficult for the two groups to agree on the priority of leadership qualities officers need. Another interesting observation is that officer candidates thought that the ability to empower others made you a good leader, while managers thought being considerate was the most important trait. For officer candidates being considerate was rank fifth in importance. For managers, empowering was viewed as important by two respondents, but viewed as unimportant by three others. This may demonstrate that the values among managers are not well aligned. In fact, in half of the list of characteristics given, there were managers that viewed the characteristic as important and other managers that viewed the characteristic as not important.

Clearly there was an area where these groups were not aligned in thinking. But it was more surprising that managers themselves did not agree. The lack of adequate sample size significantly limited the author's ability to evaluate the officer candidates' feedback. It is unknown if this difference in opinion would remain valid if many more officer candidates participated in the survey.

The manager's comments offer many considerations for future reference. One of these is that the characteristics need to be better defined. Without this detail there is no assurance that the characteristics actually meant the same to every respondent. Another revealing comment was that manager's thought of specific individuals as they answered these questions, suggesting that managers had clear models in mind when they thought about good versus poor leaders. Perhaps the survey question should be reworded as,

“Think of one of the best leaders in the Department, rank the most important leadership qualities he/she exhibits.” This line of questioning might be helpful to determine what common leadership traits are valued most highly, if any.

The manager comment about how different leadership qualities are important in different leaders requires some thought. For a leadership development program to be truly successful, it must also complement the audience’s individual talents and improve their weaknesses. The only way for students to focus on these is for them to have a certain amount of self-knowledge. It is therefore important that a successful program include tools to help students achieve that level of self-understanding. This was certainly the approach the National Fire Academy took in developing the Executive Leadership Program.

Although not part of the original scope of the research questions, the author also asked for input from both groups in another way. As part of the survey, respondents were asked to rank or discuss which leadership characteristics current officers possessed. The interesting results is that officer candidates thought the top two leadership traits needed by successful officers were also the two top traits current officers already have. Similarly, “experience”, “original” and “thrifty” rated low in both skills needed and skills already in place in the officer pool. There seems to be substantial agreement that the traits that are needed are also in place.

The responses are quite different from the managerial perspective, however. Managers thought “ambitious”, “considerate” and “flexible” were important leadership qualities our current officers need, but that current officers are already “original”,

“energy”, “daring” and “productive”. In all of these characteristics 57% of the staff thought Sugar Land officers already possessed these skills.

RECOMMENDATIONS

It became clear to this author that the research information is but a small piece of the puzzle in deciding how to organize and implement a leadership development program. One of the key considerations to get maximum impact in learning is to dovetail the classroom experience with on-the-job experience. This research showed that there is little consistency in “needs” that can drive the focus of training. Instead it is necessary to include self-assessments in the development program so that students themselves will begin to have a better understanding of their particular leadership gaps. Kotter (1998, p. 126) believed that career management should include self-assessments.

Based on the literature review and the results of the survey and focus group, Sugar Land Fire Department’s leadership development program should address the following recommendations:

1. Consider starting with self-assessments for employees enrolled in the program.
2. Use job analysis to help determine the focus of leadership topics.
3. Leadership training should occur at every level of the department.
4. The program should include classroom and experiential learning.
5. The topics should be immediately applicable.
6. The program should receive on-going evaluation.

Survey and focus group information only gets at what staff and managers “think” is needed in a leadership development program. Other critical elements necessary for a

successful program was a thorough job analysis, Kirpatrick (1993, p. 44) clearly recognized the need for this process

Kotter (1988, p. 92) states that planned development, including new job assignments, formal training, task force or committee assignments, mentoring or coaching from a senior executive, attendance at meetings outside one's core responsibility, special projects and special developmental jobs are all important for leadership development. Therefore the department should consider a comprehensive program for developing leaders that extend well beyond the classroom. Each firefighter interested in taking on leadership positions should be offered opportunities within the department to hone various aspects of leadership skills in a wide variety of ways. For example, the department currently invites firefighter participation in committee work. These assignments allow employees the opportunities to work in groups, developing negotiation, persuasion and listening skills. These opportunities should continue and more opportunities should be made available.

Kirkpatrick (1993) wrote this about training: "in general, the focus should be on the current jobs, improved knowledge, skills, and attitudes in this area result in the greatest payoff. Supervisors learn best when they can immediately use what they learn." Furthermore, he believed that "...new management skills or knowledge should be taught to the supervisors as the need for them is anticipated-before they are actually needed on the job (p. 43). The development program should therefore focus on realistic and immediately applicable skills.

Kirpatrick (1993) advised that,

“Middle and upper-level managers are constantly training first-line supervisors by the example they set. They are also coaching them by appraising their performance formally or informally and telling them what they should do and what they should quit doing. “To ensure that on-the-job development will be effective, a formal program of performance appraisal and review is probably needed. Four required elements must be met if this program is to be successful.

1. The program must be well designed.
2. The program must be understood and accepted by managers.
3. Managers must be properly trained to implement the program.
4. Proper administration and controls must be established (p. 143-144)

An organization should consider leadership development as an on-going program, with its importance highlighted at every level of the organization. In their article, Buzzotta and Lefton (1997) believed that:

“An organization that wishes to maintain leadership continuity and preserve its level of performance must have a comprehensive succession plan in place-“comprehensive” meaning that it must extend well beyond the CEO and top management level to include anyone whose contribution is essential to the organization. (p. 13)

In closing, the importance of leadership development can be summed up by the words of Maxwell (1998), “ Achievement comes to someone when he is able to do great things for himself. Success comes when he empowers followers to do great things *with* him. Significance comes when he develops leaders to do great things *for* him. But a

legacy is created only when a person puts his organization into the position to do great things *without* him. “(p. 221)

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**APPENDIX A: OFFICER CANDIDATE
SURVEY FORM**

1. Of the characteristics described, please rate from 1 (most important) to 22 (least important) the leadership characteristics you think are required to be successful as an officer in the Sugar Land Fire Department.

- _____ Able to take charge and be a role model
- _____ Willing to take risks and encourage out of the box thinking
- _____ Can inspire people and express enthusiasm
- _____ Able to develop new opportunities
- _____ Have broad understanding of the organization
- _____ Able to focus on strategic issues and have vision
- _____ Have unique and innovative ideas
- _____ Is persuasive and convincing
- _____ Has energy and is persistent
- _____ Is trusting and relates well with others
- _____ Able to communicate and coach others
- _____ Is willing to share credit and encourages others to challenge themselves
- _____ Uses humor effectively
- _____ Relates well to all others in the organization and be viewed as friendly
- _____ Can treat others fairly and sets high standards for integrity
- _____ Is well organized
- _____ Can get things done
- _____ Understands budgets and finance
- _____ Can remain objective and not overly emotional
- _____ Is adaptable and comfortable with change
- _____ Has a positive outlook
- _____ Able to build trust in the workgroup

2. Of the characteristics described, please rate our current officers and command staff overall from 1 (most in need of improvement) to 22 (skills exist).

- _____ Able to take charge and be a role model
- _____ Willing to take risks and encourage out of the box thinking
- _____ Can inspire people and express enthusiasm
- _____ Able to develop new opportunities
- _____ Have broad understanding of the organization
- _____ Able to focus on strategic issues and have vision
- _____ Have unique and innovative ideas
- _____ Is persuasive and convincing
- _____ Has energy and is persistent
- _____ Is trusting and relates well with others
- _____ Able to communicate and coach others
- _____ Is willing to share credit and encourages others to challenge themselves
- _____ Uses humor effectively
- _____ Relates well to all others in the organization and be viewed as friendly
- _____ Can treat others fairly and sets high standards for integrity
- _____ Is well organized
- _____ Can get things done
- _____ Understands budgets and finance
- _____ Can remain objective and not overly emotional
- _____ Is adaptable and comfortable with change
- _____ Has a positive outlook
- _____ Able to build trust in the workgroup

APPENDIX B: MANAGEMENT STAFF FOCUS

GROUP FORM

Leadership Needs Survey

1. On the following list, indicate with a X the top five traits necessary for a successful officer in the Sugar Land Fire Department. Indicate with an O the five least necessary traits.

- _____ Able to take charge and be a role model
- _____ Willing to take risks and encourage out of the box thinking
- _____ Can inspire people and express enthusiasm
- _____ Able to develop new opportunities
- _____ Have broad understanding of the organization
- _____ Able to focus on strategic issues and have vision
- _____ Have unique and innovative ideas
- _____ Is persuasive and convincing
- _____ Is energetic and persistent
- _____ Is trusting and relates well with others
- _____ Able to communicate and coach others
- _____ Is willing to share credit and encourages others to challenge themselves
- _____ Uses humor effectively
- _____ Relates well to all others in the organization and be viewed as friendly
- _____ Can treat others fairly and sets high standards for integrity
- _____ Is well organized
- _____ Can get things done
- _____ Understands budgets and finance
- _____ Can remain objective and not overly emotional
- _____ Is adaptable and comfortable with change
- _____ Has a positive outlook
- _____ Able to build trust in the workgroup

2. Of the characteristics described, please indicate with a X top five qualities our current officers and command staff need, an O for the five qualities officers and commanders already have

- _____ Able to take charge and be a role model
- _____ Willing to take risks and encourage out of the box thinking
- _____ Can inspire people and express enthusiasm
- _____ Able to develop new opportunities
- _____ Have broad understanding of the organization
- _____ Able to focus on strategic issues and have vision
- _____ Have unique and innovative ideas
- _____ Is persuasive and convincing
- _____ Has energy and is persistent
- _____ Is trusting and relates well with others
- _____ Able to communicate and coach others
- _____ Is willing to share credit and encourages others to challenge themselves
- _____ Uses humor effectively
- _____ Relates well to all others in the organization and be viewed as friendly
- _____ Can treat others fairly and sets high standards for integrity
- _____ Is well organized
- _____ Can get things done
- _____ Understands budgets and finance
- _____ Can remain objective and not overly emotional
- _____ Is adaptable and comfortable with change
- _____ Has a positive outlook
- _____ Able to build trust in the workgroup

APPENDIX C: RESULTS

Leadership Needs Survey, Traits successful officers should have.

Average Score	Rank	Leadership characteristic
6.63	2	Able to take charge and be a role model
11.63	14	Willing to take risks and encourage out of the box thinking
8.88	8	Can inspire people and express enthusiasm
16.63	20	Able to develop new opportunities
15.63	13	Have broad understanding of the organization
14.5	18	Able to focus on strategic issues and have vision
15.25	16	Have unique and innovative ideas
11.13	17	Is persuasive and convincing
12.75	12	Is energetic and persistent
7.63	6	Is trusting and relates well with others
7.25	5	Able to communicate and coach others
5	1	Is willing to share credit and encourages others to challenge themselves
19.88	21	Uses humor effectively
12.88	15	Relates well to all others in the organization and be viewed as friendly
6.63	2	Can treat others fairly and sets high standards for integrity
10.5	11	Is well organized
10.38	9	Can get things done
20.38	22	Understands budgets and finance
15.88	19	Can remain objective and not overly emotional
10.38	9	Is adaptable and comfortable with change
6.75	4	Has a positive outlook
8.5	7	Able to build trust in the workgroup

Leadership Survey, leadership characteristics officers already have

Average Score	Rank	Leadership characteristic
10	7	Able to take charge and be a role model
10	7	Willing to take risks and encourage out of the box thinking
8.38	5	Can inspire people and express enthusiasm
12.88	15	Able to develop new opportunities
19.63	22	Have broad understanding of the organization
13.88	17	Able to focus on strategic issues and have vision
16.25	21	Have unique and innovative ideas
10.5	10	Is persuasive and convincing
7.75	3	Is energetic and persistent
11.5	13	Is trusting and relates well with others
12.75	14	Able to communicate and coach others
5.75	1	Is willing to share credit and encourages others to challenge themselves
13.88	18	Uses humor effectively
11.25	12	Relates well to all others in the organization and be viewed as friendly
7.13	2	Can treat others fairly and sets high standards for integrity
12.25	13	Is well organized
13.75	16	Can get things done
16	20	Understands budgets and finance
11	11	Can remain objective and not overly emotional
7.88	4	Is adaptable and comfortable with change
9	6	Has a positive outlook
10.38	9	Able to build trust in the workgroup

Characteristics Necessary

Seven staff members participated, number of staff choosing X followed by numbers choosing O

- 3 _____ Able to take charge and be a role model
- 1 _____ Willing to take risks and encourage out of the box thinking
- 3, 1 _____ Can inspire people and express enthusiasm
- 0, 6 _____ Able to develop new opportunities
- 0, 2 _____ Have broad understanding of the organization
- 3, 3 _____ Able to focus on strategic issues and have vision
- 0, 2 _____ Have unique and innovative ideas
- 0, 3 _____ Is persuasive and convincing
- 1, 1 _____ Is energetic and persistent
- 1 _____ Is trusting and relates well with others
- 7 _____ Able to communicate and coach others
- 3 _____ Is willing to share credit and encourages others to challenge themselves
- 0, 6 _____ Uses humor effectively
- 1, 2 _____ Relates well to all others in the organization and be viewed as friendly
- 4 _____ Can treat others fairly and sets high standards for integrity
- 2, 2 _____ Is well organized
- 1 _____ Can get things done
- 0, 5 _____ Understands budgets and finance
- 1 _____ Can remain objective and not overly emotional
- 1 _____ Is adaptable and comfortable with change
- 3 _____ Has a positive outlook
- 0, 1 _____ Able to build trust in the workgroup

Characteristics Needed

- 5, 2 Able to take charge and be a role model
- 2, 4 Willing to take risks and encourage out of the box thinking
- 2 Can inspire people and express enthusiasm
- 2, 1 Able to develop new opportunities
- 0, 3 Have broad understanding of the organization
- 3 Able to focus on strategic issues and have vision
- 0, 4 Have unique and innovative ideas
- 1, 1 Is persuasive and convincing
- 0, 4 Has energy and is persistent
- 1 Is trusting and relates well with others
- 4, 2 Able to communicate and coach others
- 2, 3 Is willing to share credit and encourages others to challenge themselves
- _____ Uses humor effectively
- 1, 1 Relates well to all others in the organization and be viewed as friendly
- 1 Can treat others fairly and sets high standards for integrity
- 2, 1 Is well organized
- 1, 4 Can get things done
- _____ Understands budgets and finance
- 2, 1 Can remain objective and not overly emotional
- 4, 1 Is adaptable and comfortable with change
- 2, 2 Has a positive outlook
- 2 Able to build trust in the workgroup

