

OFFICER DEVELOPMENT – WHAT MAKES A LEADER?

Executive Leadership

Management versus Leadership: Developing technically competent company officers as leaders.

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April 2007

Certification Statement

I hereby certify that this paper constitutes my own product, that where the language of others is set forth, quotation marks so indicate, and that appropriate credit is given where I have used the language, ideas, expressions, or writings of another.

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Abstract

This paper was written to help transition struggling technically competent firefighter into leaders. The purpose was to evaluate leadership abilities and identify weakness and strategies to influence curriculum development.

A descriptive research model was utilized to identify current obstacles, skills and traits of leaders, existing training strategies, inherent limitations in volunteer organizations, and private sector development strategies. Relevant periodicals were reviewed and a survey of 94 department members returned valuable insight.

Since 48 respondents support developing leadership training, the AVFD is compelled to investigate the concept further. Recommendations were made to educate current leadership, identify current shortcomings, develop formal written goals and objectives, develop a leadership education and development institute, and increase communication through periodic peer review.

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Management versus Leadership:

Developing technically competent company officers as leaders.

Since 1999, the Avon Volunteer Fire Department has noticed a problem regarding retention of members and a turnover of experienced officers. This turnover has led to several newly elected officers and, concurrently, the AVFD leadership noticed that even though many of the new officers are technically competent they have had problems transitioning into leaders.

The purpose of this applied research project (ARP) will be to offer the leadership of the AVFD research based information on the benefits and limitations of using a formal process to develop members as leaders prior to them being qualified to be elected or promoted. The research will aid in the creation of an officer leadership training curriculum.

A descriptive research methodology will be utilized to define the current factors that are leading to the inconsistencies within the officer ranks and identify strategies that can be implemented into the AVFD training curriculum. The following research questions were identified: (a) What obstacles exist that hinder technically competent individuals from being leaders, (b) what knowledge, skills, and abilities are expected from department leaders, (c) what strategies can be utilized to help develop technically competent leaders, (d) what limitations are present that might hinder the use of certain strategies, (e) what leadership strategies exist in the private sector that could be applicable to the fire service?

An internal survey used to query current and retired AVFD officers on their needs, and expectations, and to establish a participation level was critical and considered to be an important first step in this study. Analysis of the feedback will be performed, and then utilized to develop recommendations for the development of a comprehensive training program.

Background and Significance

The AVFD was incorporated in July of 1960 and chartered with the responsibility to provide fire protective services to the Town of Avon. The Town of Avon is a thriving residential community on the outskirts of Hartford, Connecticut. The department consists of 130 active volunteer members comprising of combat fire fighters (104 members) and administrative staff (26 members). The AVFD operates out of four fire stations using five engines, one ladder truck, two rescues, a brush truck and two support vehicles to protect 22.6 square miles and over 16,000 people. The command structure of the department consists of the Fire Chief, who reports to the Board of Directors, and eighteen officers (See Appendix A) that are elected and two Division Chiefs that are appointed by the Fire Chief. The Assistant and Deputy Chiefs are elected by the membership every other year and the remaining non-appointed officers are elected on an annual basis by each of their respective companies. The Board members are elected to serve three year terms which are staggered in such a manner that each year three new members are elected.

The AVFD, like many of the volunteer fire departments in Connecticut, use a process which involves peer voting to elect its officers and has a set of minimum certifications and length of time requirements for each position. At no point in the process is the individual's ability to influence others taken into consideration.

The AVFD has spent years developing a plan for its physical growth but has not paid much attention to developing its members. Because of the lack of personnel development and a sense of membership confusion about the department's mission, goals and objectives, the AVFD hired a consultant to help develop a strategic master plan. In May of 2006, the AVFD started a strategic planning process because the leadership felt there was a need to make some system-wide changes and create some forward momentum. The only way they felt it would be accomplished was to utilize the influence from the outside. The initial meeting was held on a

Saturday morning and generated about 20 members from the leadership and rank in file. The outcome of this meeting was a redefined vision and mission statement for the AVFD. Three areas of immediate concern were identified: communications, recruitment and retention of members, and changes in the leadership structure of the line officers and Board of Directors. The greatest concern dealt with internal and external communications and 10 months later 54% of AVFD survey respondents confirmed the initial strategic planning results.

Before the development of the strategic plan, in early 2000, the leadership of the AVFD began to notice that its officers were experiencing an increase in personnel issues that required more involvement from the executive level than had been seen in previous years. From a leadership perspective, the overwhelming operational concern is that company officers are not leading their people as much as they are managing assets. With all the required firefighter training prior to promotion, the officers are more than technically competent to perform the tasks, but they appear to excel in executing them rather than leading others to produce the desired outcome. This trend has continued since 2000 and is now affecting daily operations in the following ways:

- The Fire Chief goes to more calls now because he feels he has to so that the outcome is favorable.
- Assigned projects are not being completed in a timely manner.
- The rewrite of current Standard Operating Guidelines (SOG) has been assigned a lower priority because the Fire Chief spends too much time dealing with decisions better suited at lower ranks.
- Improper planning and spending by officers has forced all spending approvals to be approved by the Fire Chief and board treasurer.

- Companies voting in officers to “hold positions” so potentially qualified individuals from other stations can not run for that position.

The largest limiting factor that was identified during the strategic planning process was a lack of time and availability for many of the department members. Since the majority of the AVFD business and training is handled during Monday night drills, time is extremely limited. On average, if you eliminate holidays and the monthly business meeting, the AVFD trains thirty-five nights a year for two hours per night. The inadequacies of not having a leadership development process can be clearly seen when analyzing past personnel issues. However, when we look at our current situation, the existing and future impact of untrained leaders will increase the workload of the executive officers, whose work continues to go unfinished and the vision of the department will not be fulfilled.

The entire curriculum of the Executive Fire Officer Program (EFOP) is designed around developing middle managers into great leaders. In the first year of the program we looked at how our influence affects our department. As the course evolved, we honed our skills to enable us to better self-reflect on how to arrange our personal and professional development to strengthen our department’s potential. It is through this education that the Executive Fire Officer (EFO) has been given the added directive to bring back to their community the skills, knowledge and abilities to train, counsel, and mentor all subordinates and potential leaders under their control. It will only be through this development process that the fire service will begin to save the lives of its own. This directly supports the USFA operational objectives to reduce the loss of life from fire of firefighters and to respond to emerging issues in a timely manner.

Literature Review

Whether you are running a Fortune 500 company or a Fire Department, in most cases

there is one person who is *the* leader. As an independent third party looking at any organization, you will first notice, throughout, that there are many people in leadership roles. With deeper examination you will find leaders with no titles at all. So what sets these individuals apart from the technically competent firefighters in the AVFD? The literature reviewed suggests that it stems from several tribulations: Leadership misconceptions, lack of leadership role models, misaligned expectations, a system-wide practice of micro-managing, and not properly decentralizing authority.

In his book, *The 360° Leader*, John Maxwell (2005), identified seven myths that individuals have about leading from the middle of an organization. The seven myths are:

- Position – “I can’t lead if I am not at the top”
- Destination – “When I get to the top, then I’ll learn to lead”
- Influence – “If I were on top, then people would follow me”
- Inexperience – “When I get to the top, I’ll be in control”
- Freedom – “When I get to the top, I’ll no longer be limited”
- Potential – “I can’t reach my potential if I’m not the top leader”
- All-or-Nothing – “If I can’t get to the top, then I won’t try to lead”

Each of these myths centers on an attitude that only the person at the top of an organization can lead and how this misconception affects their ability to influence people at their existing level. It is Maxwell’s opinion that this mentality is absurd and you can have a profound impact as a leader leading from the middle. Maxwell continually emphasizes that just because you have a title at the top does not automatically make you a leader. Leadership development goes well beyond titles and the true progression is finding out how your influence, at all levels, will make you a better leader.

Developing your influence takes time and skill but must be accomplished if you wish to succeed in any organization. By understanding the dynamics of gaining influence with people and by using Maxwell's Five Levels of Leadership (Maxwell, 2005), the leader in the middle will come to realize that a position or title has little to do with leadership. For example, when the Fire Chief appoints or the membership votes in a new company officer, that officer is being placed directly at the first level, regardless of their qualifications or certifications. As a new officer, your influence will not exceed beyond the duties outlined in your job description. At this stage firefighters will follow you because they have to, not because you motivate them. The longer you stay at this level the higher the turnover of personnel and the lower the morale. As you build proper relationships with your members by treating them with respect and dignity they will in kind return to you the permission to lead them, thus, securing you on the 2nd step or relationship level.

As you develop further and your team produces more results within the organization, you are able to move to the third or production level where your members follow you because of what you have done for the betterment of the organization. People like what you have done and problems get repaired with little or no effort due to the energy you have created within your group. To reach the fourth level you must give of yourself to develop others. The goal at this level is to value your firefighters, add value to them through mentoring and in turn make them better leaders and more valuable to the department. Now they are following you because of what you have done for them.

The last level can only be reached through the will of your people, and only because you have excelled for a long period of time, out in front, as their leader. Only your members can place you at this top rated level. These are the firefighters that will follow you to the gates of

Hell and back.

Once an individual is made aware of these misconceptions, their journey of leading from the middle can begin. Maxwell's book goes on to identify seven challenges that leaders in the middle will face and supplies tested principles that will help leaders learn how to lead up with your leader, lead across with your colleagues and lead down with your followers to succeed as a leader in the middle and become the 360° leader.

Another misconception in many organizations is that you must have a title to be a leader. Many successful leaders like John Maxwell, Mark Sanborn and Michael Abrashoff believe that everyone has the opportunity to lead in every aspect of their lives. They also believe that anyone can learn to be a leader and influence the world around them. In the book, *You Don't Need a Title to be a Leader*, Mark Sanborn (2006) takes the reader through several examples of people in everyday life making a difference without needing or even wanting a title. Sanborn believes that the real test of leadership is that if you did not have a title or the ability to punish or reward, could you still get people to follow you? If so, you are a leader regardless of your title.

In the fire service we look at the company officer as the *official* first line leader. But Sanborn is saying that even the newest recruit can be an *untitled* leader. He attributes this to a concept of leadership known as *little l*. It is all about the small things that anyone can do during daily operations that will have a positive influence on our department and in the community. The bottom line for Sanborn is "influence and inspiration come from the person, not the position" (Sanborn, 2006, p.7).

Since it is the prevailing opinion that individuals can be taught to be leaders, it is important to allow, or empower, your followers to lead in their daily activities. You must create an atmosphere that promotes independent decision-making with the best interest of the

organization I mind. Commander Michael Abrashoff developed this method of thinking on his ship the USS Benfold. When he took over, the USS Benfold was considered by the Navy to be the worst ship in the fleet. It had the highest staff turnover and the morale was at an all time low. Commander Abrashoff made it perfectly clear to all his officers that he expected every member of his crew to take responsibility for turning the Benfold around and make it the “Best Damn Ship in the Navy”. He accomplished this by empowering his crew to make all decisions; except he had three conditions. A crew member was expected to make any decision that did not involve damage to the ship, did not cost the taxpayers money and did not have the potential to kill someone. If one or more of those conditions were possible, he had to be part of the decision making process (Abrashoff, 2002). The newest seaman could make decisions that in the past would have only been made by titled officers. Abrashoff developed an entire ship of untitled leaders, on the USS Benfold, which became the Navy’s “go to” ship in times of crisis.

Identified early in the literature review was the need for role models in organizations to provide examples of great leadership skills. In conjunction with role modeling is the practice of staff mentoring and performance based assessments which will help individuals looking to further themselves in the organization and the development of the skills and abilities to lead.

The Delray Beach Fire-Rescue Department began to experience a large exodus of seasoned fire officers in the late 1990’s. The department had initiated this problem in 1993 by adopting a deferred compensation plan that allowed many of the eligible firefighters to retire with 20 years of service and defer their monthly pension payments for a maximum of five years. At the five year mark, many of the chief officers and lieutenants that had been leading the department were retiring which made room for several newly promoted chief officers and newly promoted officers.

This exodus had a two fold effect on the department. First, officers that had been mentored by the retiring chief officers were now going to fill the newly vacant positions and enabled the department to maintain a well groomed core of leaders and a continuity of service. The second effect was that a new generation of younger leaders were being promoted that would bring a more diverse set of goals and experiences to the department leadership. The Delray Fire-Rescue Department had been proactive and planned for this mass departure by having a mentoring program available to its members (Accardi, 2003).

The need for proficiently administered performance evaluations is desired by most employees and its end result should be to enhance work satisfaction and makes sure that performance expectations are clearly defined. In 2004, as part of the author's research for the Executive Development ARP, the AVFD membership was surveyed on the topic of performance evaluations and the need to implement a formal system. The overwhelming response from the membership was that 85% of those surveyed felt that they would personally benefit from a formal process (Deckers, 2004). Even volunteer members of an organization hunger for clear expectations and feedback on their performance. According to the authors of *Management in the Fire Service* (1999), an evaluation should lead to the following improvements:

1. Improved performance and higher quality of work life.
 - The improved performance is seen due to more recognition of the firefighter's accomplishments and through the development of a plan for progression in the department.
2. Better control of the department's activities.
 - Some officers see this as an opportunity to micro-manage but a performance evaluation achieves better control by giving the employee freedom while clearly

setting limits.

The concept of micro-managing must be investigated further. If the fire chief wants to create an efficient and more in sync workforce he must be able to effectively decentralize his authority. The process is empowering your employees to make decisions and not micro-managing them. The greatest fear for fire chiefs is that they might lose control of their department. But the Executive Fire Officer has to accept the notion that the department is not solely theirs but is an extension of the membership (Holman, 2006).

Once the obstacles have been identified, the next logical step is to develop an educational and personnel development process that will not only identify potential leaders but help transition them into leadership roles. The logical first step in this process is to determine the knowledge, skills, and abilities (KSA's) that are expected from department leaders. While looking at the KSA's, you must also look at what traits or attributes make a good leader and develop ways to enhance those qualities.

There are volumes of documents written about what a leader must possess to make them great and depending on the author and their school of thought opinions differ greatly. Some believe you can only be born into that right, while others feel that with the proper mentoring you can develop the skill. The fire service has for years used the guidance of the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) which develops national standards and acceptable practices for fire departments. One standard used when analyzing the KSA's for fire officers is the 2003 edition of the *NFPA 1021 Standard for Fire Officer Professional Qualifications*. The goal of this standard is to define progressive levels of performance required at the four identified levels of responsibility. This document can be used as a baseline for performance expectations.

Dennis Compton in chapter 6 of *The Fire Chief's Handbook* addresses leadership for today and tomorrow in the fire service on a more conceptual level than directly looking at the KSA's need by the company officer. He looks at a model of developing a strong leadership foundation by adopting the following philosophies: Leadership by example, treat people with respect, develop a strong sense of personal leadership, and paying attention to ethics. The chapter continues to address the employees needs for constant coaching, direction and motivation to help create a system of leaders. Chief Compton finishes off the chapter by emphasizing the need for progressive employee relations and developing a system wide approach to dealing with fire department leadership.

Identifying the skills that you would like a company officer to possess is important but just the possession of a skill set will not make them a leader. An individual can be technically competent at the skill but may never be considered a leader. Much of the fire service literature reviewed centered on skill development and did not tackle the concept of developing the attributes needed to be a leader. John C. Maxwell has written several books on developing the leader from within and has identified 21 indispensable qualities that a leader must have to become the person others will want to follow.

Maxwell feels that the separation between following a person because you have to and passionately following them to the ends of the earth lies in the character qualities of the individual person. The fire service for years has shied away from this type of leadership training especially in the firefighter ranks. With that in mind let's look at Maxwell's second quality: Charisma. He defines it as the first impression can seal the deal (Maxwell, 1999). Let's look at the new probationary firefighter who enters the fire service and is only taught skills that relate to mitigation of emergency incidents. We never talk about character, commitment, passion, or even

servanthood yet we expect on the day that we promote that firefighter to lieutenant that they possess the ability to be that rock of integrity you built your department on. Maxwell would tell you that as a leader you have just set this individual up for failure.

The literature review returned one very interesting piece of work written by the leadership consultant Steve Farber on the concept of extreme leadership. This leadership parable takes you on a personal journey through a week long adventure in which Steve learns about what it takes to make the Radical LEAP. The concept of LEAP requires that in order for an individual to be an extreme leader they must understand and practice the following: Cultivate Love, generate Energy, inspire Audacity, and provide Proof (Farber, 2004). It is through this practice that your followers will see your true leadership abilities and follow you anywhere.

An extensive search of the Learning Resource Center yielded four EFO papers that directly dealt with the concept of leadership and developing technically competent firefighters. Each organization reviewed felt that they had to develop a system that worked for their department since nothing was currently available in their system outside of the courses held at the National Fire Academy (NFA). The Sandy Fire District #72 is a combination department that promotes both career and volunteer officers using the same promotional system. In 2006, Gary McQueen felt that the best strategy was to incorporate leadership training during monthly drills, train department officers to the level of Fire Officer I, and initiate a performance evaluation process for all members. Long range plans for the department included developing a mentoring program, conducting a strategic planning process to create a better vision for the future, and sending more people to the NFA to take advantage of the two-week core programs and the one-week volunteer incentive programs.

Norfolk Fire Rescue, Killen Fire Department, and the Delray Beach Fire-Rescue Department all felt that development of the company officer was essential to the success of their respective departments. They all felt the need to develop committees that would design an internal leadership program that should use NFPA 1021 as a focal point for the curriculum development and that outside seminars and related course work would be useful. By developing committees they felt that they would have a better chance at obtaining “buy-in” from their memberships. Another common thread found in the research was the need to have a strong performance measurement tool incorporated directly into the leadership training program (Accardi, 2003; Evans, 2006; McQueen, 2006; Young 2006).

One strategy utilized by the Alexandria Virginia Fire Department to train officers and civilian managers was to create and implement a Leadership, Education and Development (LEAD) Institute. Chief Hawkins (2000) felt that the first step in the program’s creation was to develop a set of guiding principles:

- The curriculum couldn’t be abstract; it needed to be real. The subject matter had to be something the students could actually use.
- All curriculum components must have end objectives that are specific and measurable.
- Instructors must use innovative instructional techniques, such as case studies, role-playing, and group interaction.

With the guiding principles outlined, the development team had to determine the best methods to present the curriculum and they decided on a four phased program of study with 4- and 8-hour modules. Phase one focuses on individual development and concentrates on helping the new leaders identify their strengths and weaknesses. Phase two centers on management

skills required to manage a diverse work force. Phase three deals with legal aspects and employee evaluations and the final phase focuses on department specific programs like managing emergency incidents, customer service, financial management, and citywide expectations. Chief Hawkins believes that “If you want quality, commit the financial resources to make it happen” (Hawkins, 2000).

The International Association of Fire Chiefs (IAFC) has created the Officer Development Handbook as an architectural plan to create competent leaders. IAFC feels that “professional development is the planned, progressive life-long process of education, training, self-development and experience” (IAFC, 2003). The handbook is broken down into a logical progression from Supervising Fire Officer (SFO) and finishing with the Executive Fire Officer. Each section is further broken down into the following core elements: Training, Education, Experience and Self-Development. The handbook also directly supports NFPA 1021 and recommends integrating them into your development plan. This document supports the philosophy of establishing criteria so that a portfolio review process can be utilized to evaluate on the job experience.

Planning for leadership development or organizational change in the private sector is a process known as succession planning. It is a system used by businesses to make sure that there is no interruption in service. Hildy Gottlieb (2006) discussed in her article *Succession Planning: The Elephant in the Room* that non-profits must replace reliance on individuals with reliance on systems. The result is a system-based approach that ensures that if the CEO suddenly departs from the organization, it will not cause the company to uncontrollably spiral away. The concept is to make sure that all the key pieces are in place to ensure a smooth transition in all mission-critical positions and develop redundancy.

The literature reviewed directly supports the need for the AVFD to put into practice a system that will better train, educate and develop competent firefighters to be leaders prior to them being promoted. Since one of the principle objectives of the Executive Leadership course is to provide a framework of executive-level competencies by focusing primarily on issues and areas of personal effectiveness it is a logical step to then develop those same competencies for all leaders within an organization.

Procedures

The purpose of this ARP is to offer the leadership of the AVFD, research based information on the benefits and limitations of using a formal process to develop members, as leaders, prior to them being elected or promoted. The research was designed to provide a current membership perspective on the quality of leadership presently in place and identify topics of study for the program. It was decided that the use of a descriptive research methodology would produce the greatest results by researching sources from both the private & public sector and specifically items related to fire service leadership. The first step was to analyze existing department Standard Operating Guidelines and Policies to determine if any leadership selection criteria existed and if an officer development process had been created at a curriculum level but not yet implemented. Next a review of department and town budgets was performed to analyze the amount of annual funding set aside for program development and leadership seminars.

An internal survey was considered necessary to determine the current opinions of the department leadership and problems within the organization. A request was made at the department business meeting in March of 2007, soliciting all members to invest 10 to 15 minutes to provide feedback on the department leadership and needs for an officer development program. The survey was developed in a Web based format, and an informational Email was sent to all

members in the AVFD network (Appendix B) explaining how to take the survey. The goal was to have all 130 active members submit a survey.

The survey was developed by analyzing surveys developed by other EFO participants (Accardi, 2003; McQueen, 2006; Young 2002) and the author's personal experience. The survey was broken down into five sections beginning with demographics by asking seven questions to help gain background on the individual and the position(s) they hold or have held in the department. The next twelve questions were designed to extract the individual's viewpoints on the current leadership and the leadership problems within the department. The next nineteen questions analyzed specific attributes and asked the respondent to rate the performance of department leaders based on a predefined explanation of that trait. The rating scale triggered a response from poor to excellent with poor indicating a need for additional training. The next three questions were designed to allow the respondent to select the top ten skills and traits that an individual should possess prior to being promoted into a leadership role. The last six questions asked the respondent to define management and leadership in their own words and whether or not the AVFD should create a department-wide leadership program and who should be required to attend. The last question on the survey was an essay question that allowed for additional comments and clarifications.

Three limitations were realized during the research that could adversely affect the results. First, a search of the Learning Resource Center at the National Emergency Training Center in Emmitsburg, MD identified that there was a lack of resources which specifically addressed leadership in volunteer organizations, and the development of volunteer company officers. The second limitation was not requiring all department members to complete the survey and along those lines that some of the respondents did not answer all the questions. The lack of

membership involvement in the initial process may become an obstacle later during curriculum development and program implementation.

The final limitation could be classified as a previously unidentified gap in information sharing. This is a two part issue in which the author made assumptions about department technology usage. First was an assumption that all current members had an Email account on the AVFD Email server. After further investigation it was noted that only 94 out of 130 or 72% of the membership have active accounts. The second assumption was that users had a better understanding of internet browser features and could efficiently maneuver around a web page. After direct communications with members, it was noted that some users were confused by the online instructions. Some of the users, when they experienced trouble, took the time to send an Email outlining the difficulty and attached a copy of their responses to be added to the official record. The impact of this technological shortcoming will not be experienced until curriculum development, at which time; these users may feel that their opinions were not fully taken into account.

Definitions:

Command Authority – the rights given to you by the Fire Chief to exercise direct control over others in your company or on the fireground.

NFPA 1001 Standard for Fire Fighter Professional Qualifications – This is a standard that was created by the National Fire Protection Association to establish a benchmark of knowledge, skills and abilities that are required to be a firefighter.

SFO – Supervising Fire Officer – This rank is considered as the first line managerial position in which the individual directly supervise a company or group of firefighters.

Results

Between the literature reviewed and the outcome of the survey, the authors and AVFD members agree that a formal leadership training program should be incorporated into the organization. Of the 130 person department, fifty-one (39%) surveys were completed and returned. Since most organizations feel that a 20% return is acceptable, the AVFD membership illustrated that they want their opinions heard. After the first two weeks of the survey period only ten surveys had been returned. This rate was seen as extremely low so an additional Email was sent out to the membership reminding them of the survey and supplying them with the website and instructions again. Also during this time period, the researcher realized that the AVFD Email distribution system was set up to only reach 94 members or 72% of the current membership. It was decided not to try to reach all 130 and rely on the 72% to establish a benchmark for the department. On April 2, 2007 the survey was taken offline and the final total showed that 51 surveys or 54% of the Email distribution list were returned. The data was analyzed and results were noted in Appendix D.

The survey was designed in five parts and the first section generated certain demographic information that would identify whether or not the individual was currently or had in the past served in a leadership role within the AVFD. Of the respondents, 73% indicated that they have never held a position on the Board of Directors and 51% have never been line officers. It can be derived then that the majority of respondents were evaluating how they were being lead or as it might be the case, managed. Another important demographic was that 61% of the respondents have served with the department for 10 years or less and 39% have never held a leadership role. When asked about the number of years that an individual had served in a leadership role, 29% have less than five years and only 14% have held a position for more than 10 years. When asked about leadership experience outside of the AVFD, 73% of the surveys indicated that many

individuals supervise others in their current employment.

The second part of the survey was designed to evaluate the membership's opinion of the current leadership and the top 5 weaknesses that need to be addressed through education and training. These questions also helped to identify if the membership agreed with the authors that certain obstacles exist that will hinder technically competent individuals from becoming leaders. The first fallacy that all leadership experts try to disprove is that leaders are born and you can not teach someone to be a good leader, and since 86% of those surveyed responded that you can be taught, this is one misconception that the leadership program will not have to invest an abundance of time addressing.

John Maxwell (2005) & Mark Sanborn (2006) would be proud of the AVFD membership since 98% believe that you do not need a title to be a leader, but over 64% feel that the department has not prepared them to be leaders. Of the 64%, 27% feel that their current position does not fall into a leadership role. This opinion will require that the leadership curriculum introduce the concept of the 360° leader that John Maxwell has endorsed, and facilitate an understanding of how your personal influence can help you lead from the middle of the pack.

Since students learn from the past experiences of others, it was decided that a membership perspective was needed to identify the 5 greatest weaknesses that could be addressed during curriculum development to provide students with common stumbling blocks of new leaders. The membership identified the five as communication (65%), application of rules (55%), accountability (51%), follow through (45%) and arrogance of ego (39%). This question was evaluated by counting the number of times an item was chosen by the respondents. A common theme throughout the survey and the literature review was lack of consistent communication and feedback and having clear goals and objectives that will steer department

decisions. The literature review suggests the development of department-wide goals and objectives and a formal evaluation process will help clear up any questions that 59% of the AVFD membership has about the mission and department goals.

The last section of part two looked at the membership perspective on how their ideas were received by the leadership and if their input was valued. 51% of the respondents feel that they have a say in the department, and 65% feel that their input is valued. When asked if they felt empowered 59% feel that they are not and 55% are afraid to question the decisions of a superior. The next question truly identifies whether the department is being lead or managed by asking whether or not current company officers orders are being followed based on their command authority or because the members respect them. Only 27% of the respondents feel that the officers have earned their respect. So according to Maxwell (2005), the majority of our officers have never left the Position Level of the “Five Levels of Leadership” which might explain the low morale within the department. Finally, when asked where their leadership abilities were developed only 8% or 4 individuals chose that the department has adequately supplied them with the knowledge, skills and abilities to lead.

In part three of the survey, the membership was asked to rate the overall leadership on 19 leadership traits. An important component of any leadership training program is to identify the core values of the organization and develop leaders that support those values and the associated traits. By using John Maxwell’s book, *The 21 Indispensable Qualities of a Leader* and other EFO papers a list a 19 qualities was developed. The respondent was asked to rate how the entire leadership performed using a scale from poor to excellent. See appendix D for the complete results but the overall rating was a “D” or fair. This evaluation should be a wake up call to all department officers that additional attention in these areas is mandatory since 65% of the

respondents are considered to be their followers.

Part four was developed to identify the knowledge, skills, and abilities that the AVFD membership feel should be expected from department leaders. The section used three questions to identify the 10 traits needed in a leadership program and then what required training and experience was needed for both Board members and Line Officers. The top three traits that need to be stressed during curriculum development once again fell into line with the strategic planning outcomes. They were effective communications (88%), professionalism (78%) and having a positive attitude (75%). Interestingly, accountability, being a motivator and being responsible were all chosen by 73% of the membership. The lowest rating in the top ten was the trait of being ethical which only 49% of the respondents chose.

Once the traits were acknowledged, we needed to find out what training and experience should Board members possess prior to being promoted. Overwhelmingly the respondents felt that communication skills (88%) were a must, followed by ethics (86%), planning (84%), and conflict resolution (82%). 33% of the respondents felt that some introduction to town politics would also be helpful. The KSA's for officers differed slightly in that 92% of the respondents felt that emergency scene operations was a critical skill to possess prior to promotion followed by communication (88%), training presentation skills (86%) and conflict resolution (86%).

The final part was composed of six questions that looked at the concept of management versus leadership and if there was a difference between the words. It also evaluated the memberships desire to create a leadership training program and who should receive the training and what the focus should be when discussing the curriculum. 90% of the respondents feel that there is a distinct difference between management and leadership. Each respondent was given the opportunity to describe, in their own words, the difference. Even though some respondents

left these questions blank, the common thread was that managers deal in the technical problem solving spectrum where problems and solutions are known. However, a leader motivates followers to deal with the adaptive or unclear problems and solutions (DHS, 2005). 94% of the respondents feel that a leadership training program should be created and 55% believe that it should be offered to the entire membership. When it comes to the main focus of the curriculum, the majority or 51% feel that the program must emphasize more interpersonal relationship skills than tactical incident operations.

The survey concluded with an open-ended essay question that allowed the respondent an opportunity to provide additional feedback about the AVFD leadership and the development of a leadership training program. For some of the responses it seemed like a place to vent personal concerns and even agendas but overall the feedback highlighted areas that the current leadership must consider and evaluate. The evaluation process needs to be done at all levels within our leadership and for some that may require some soul searching. The end result must be a decision to continue in an official role or step down and help mentor others to reach their fullest potential.

Because of the nature of an open-ended question, a side benefit was achieved. It highlighted obstacles that might negatively influence curriculum development and implementation. The largest concern was that the membership feels that there is a limited number of individuals, who they respect, that provide a lead by example attitude from the top of the organization. Another prevalent issue is the belief that the leadership is inconsistent in their policy enforcement and that far too many clichés exist within the leadership ranks.

The internal survey did not address the different strategies that could be utilized to train the technically competent firefighters or the potential systems in place in the private sector that also struggle with leadership development. However, the literature review found sources that

identified programs that can be modified to fit any organizational need.

In summation, the survey results directly support the need for an official leadership development program in the AVFD. The current leadership performance of a “D” and the lack of respect for department officers are unacceptable and should be a wake up call for all those involved. The results stress that a leadership program must include proper training at all levels within the organization, a fair and consistent performance evaluation process, and a strategic master plan that includes, in writing, the new vision of the AVFD, its mission and most importantly clear, concise and obtainable goals and objectives.

Discussion

In the last 10 years, the AVFD has spent a tremendous amount of time, energy and financial resources in developing technically competent fire fighters. In the late 1990’s the only department requirement for a combat firefighter was that the individual must have Firefighter I, according to NFPA 1001 and Hazardous Materials Operations. In 1994 the department had adopted a three tiered response system that was designed to allow firefighters to operate at emergency incidents based on their level of training.

In 1997 a decision was made to invest additional department resources to develop more competent firefighters by altering the response system to include team leader or officer functions. This change required anyone wishing to be an officer or team leader to obtain the certification of firefighter II. This change allowed the AVFD to shift into line with the full requirements of NFPA 1001. It also addressed a deficiency identified in the Connecticut Statutes, enforced by the Occupational Safety and Health Agency (OSHA) that officers must be trained commensurate with their duties and to a level higher than their subordinates. The system took a few years to fully implement but seemed to be working.

Due to a lack of a formal evaluation process and other organizational priorities, it was not until early in 2003, that the leadership noticed that just having a technically competent firefighter in an officer role did not make the person an effective leader. Emergency calls had steadily increased and these technically competent firefighters or assigned leaders could resolve situations but only through a direct hands-on approach. The department had experienced an influx of new members and newly elected officers and it became evident that members were becoming increasingly more frustrated with their officers. The frustration seemed to stem from a system-wide practice of micro-managing.

Even though 59% of the membership feels that they are empowered to make decisions, the AVFD leadership needs to better understand the entire empowerment process because 55% are afraid to question non-emergent decisions made by officers. Holman emphasizes that without utilizing the following three parts, empowerment will always fail. First, a task must be given to the person being empowered, and along with that task, the authority and education to make formal decisions without any involvement from the Executive Officers except for requested guidance must be given. Finally the person being empowered must be held accountable for their actions. Holman's research identified six potential barriers and gives leaders suggestions on how to overcome each obstacle. The barriers are:

- Unclear expectations – Leaders need to set clear and realistic and measurable expectations that are periodically evaluated.
- Unwillingness to consider others' ideas – A fire service leader is expected to utilize their resources effectively. It is paramount leaders understand that personnel is the department's greatest resource.
- Unwillingness to give up control – Failure is not an option; it is the fire chief's

responsibility to make sure that the employee has the knowledge, skills and abilities to carry out the assignment.

- Unwillingness to allow mistakes – Since we all make mistakes and should learn from them when they occur, it is imperative that the fire chief give people the opportunity to make mistakes since it will increase their willingness to take risk, and thus be a better leader. Commander Abrashoff would sum this barrier up by stating “if all you give is orders, then all you will get are order-takers.”

(Abrashoff, 2002, p. 107)

- Unwilling to trust employees - Building trust requires good communication and relationship skills. Ensure that you have established clear and reasonable goals and parameters so that your firefighters can succeed and stay away from micro-managing the process. “Set your parrots free and allow your people to think for themselves” (Abrashoff, 2002, p. 108).
- Failure to develop staff – Firefighters must be properly trained so that they will understand why they must perform the task and how it relates to the organization.

The research identified other obstacles or challenges that exist and must be discussed.

Recognizing that the art of leadership is not just reserved for the head of the organization is a crucial first step. Every organization has titled and untitled leaders and to be an effective leader from the middle you must understand that these challenges exist and be able to develop skills to better navigate through the likely pitfalls. John C Maxwell (2005) lists the following seven challenges facing the middle manager:

- Tension – The pressure of being caught in the middle
- Frustration – Following an ineffective leader

- Multi-Hat – One head, many hats
- Ego – You're often hidden in the middle
- Fulfillment – Leaders like the front more than the middle
- Vision – Championing the vision is more difficult when you didn't create it
- Influence – Leading others beyond your position is not easy

In contrast to the author's original assumptions, it is clear from the survey results that many of the misconceptions Maxwell identified in the beginning of the *360° Leader* do not affect the AVFD membership. However, company officers are not earning membership respect and need to look at the how they influence others and evaluate how their actions are perceived by the general membership. 71% of the respondents believe it is important to recognize that a position does not make a leader. Also it must be noted that a good leader will influence well beyond their stated position while a bad leader will minimize their influence to a point less than what originally came with the position (Maxwell, 2005).

Since an individual's perception is their reality, it is important to understand how you are perceived by them. In many cases this information is extremely difficult to obtain. The survey allowed the membership an opportunity to rate current officers and board members on nineteen traits that judged the membership's perception. The overall rating was a "D" (See Appendix D). This information will help provide a starting point for which the current leadership must accept this feedback constructively and act on the information. In most cases, employees are afraid to inform their bosses that things are not good in fear of retribution. Because this is an emotional issue a leader must listen aggressively to the firefighter's concerns and see the department through their eyes, with one goal in mind – to have the best damn fire department in the country (Abrashoff, 2002).

All of the authors reviewed stress that your first impression will be a lasting one and this was reiterated in many of the survey comments. With that in mind, it will be important for the leadership development curriculum to stress the concepts of integrity, communication, and servant-hood. Mark Sanborn creatively illustrates these in a concept he calls ROI. Making sure not to confuse the reader he stresses that he is not speaking about managing investments but the importance of how you develop relationships (R), outcomes (O) and generate improvements (I) (Sanborn, 2006). He goes on to give examples how ordinary employees became extra-ordinary leaders in their organization regardless of their titles. Sanborn stresses the need for leaders to look at every situation as an opportunity to strengthen a relationship, change an outcome or improve upon the way you do business. The AVFD officers should pay attention to the silent signals sent by their members that will provide them with opportunities to increase their ROI.

The last obstacle that must be mentioned is that most employees and volunteers need feedback not just to correct a deficiency but more importantly to reinforce good performance with positive consequences (Abrashoff, 2002; Accardi, 2003; Maxwell, 2005; McQueen, 2006; Sanborn, 2006). In January of 2004, the AVFD membership took a survey regarding the need for a performance evaluation system and at that time only 15% of those surveyed felt that there was no need for a formal system (Deckers, 2004). Another interesting result was that the AVFD leadership realized that 11 out of the 19 officers felt that when they were promoted no one explained the difference in their duties and responsibilities. This fact alone should emphasize that without a proper system in place to clearly define expectations you will continue to have a system with misaligned expectations. The AVFD leadership will be dodging their responsibility to make sure that members have the KSA's to support the department's vision, mission and goals.

Even though the AVFD will almost certainly experience other obstacles during the curriculum development phases, it is important to ascertain which KSA's the department wants to concentrate on for its leaders and develop a strategy for developing technically competent leaders. Since 92% of the respondents felt that an officer should have the training to handle emergency scene operations prior to being promoted, and 82% believe the course work should concentrate on interpersonal dynamics, curriculum development should focus on personnel issues and the qualities of being a leader.

The literature review returned two sources that the AVFD should adopt to guide and validate the leadership development program. The first document is the *NFPA 1021 Standard for Fire Officer Professional Qualifications* that has identified the required job performance requirements (JPR's) necessary to perform the duties of a fire officer and specifically addresses the four levels of progression from SFO to EFO. The AVFD should not reinvent the wheel by spending an abundance of time creating goals and objectives for learning since the Connecticut Fire Academy has adopted NFPA 1021 as its baseline for officer training. However, the curriculum team must understand that the standard is considered to be minimum set of requirements and the AVFD does have department specific issues that must be addressed. For consistency the team will need to understand how to develop organizational JPR's. The NFPA started using the concept of JPR's to provide both the public and private sectors with a framework that would help to enhance the profession and standardize practices. JPR's are broken down into 3 components; the task, the tools needed and a performance outcome. In the above example it also outlines the required knowledge and skill that must be possessed prior to being given this type of task. So the individual must take part in an educational process that enables this type of learning to take place (NFPA, 2003).

The next document that compliments the NFPA standard is the IAFC Officer Development Handbook. The handbook takes the JPR concept and expands upon it to create an architectural plan for career development. This handbook also establishes a perfect foundation for the creation of a portfolio review process. Since the document is broken down into the four levels of fire service progression it allows the adoption of not only skill based requirements but more importantly it takes into account actual hands-on experience. This document takes an individual that may have all the certifications and training and directly ties personal development to those work related experiences needed to foster the mastery of basic skills and the development of self-confidence (IAFC, 2003).

When designing the curriculum for the SFO the team must decide how to incorporate the recommendations of the IAFC into a volunteer system. Currently the AVFD requires 50% of the IAFC recommended training. There is one management class which is evaluated by the Training Division, only 3 years of department experience are required and nothing under the self-development component. It is the author's opinion that the SFO requirements would be easy to transfer into the department's current SFO positional requirements. However, as individuals are promoted upwards the time needed to acquire the training, education and experience does not correlate with the current system of voting in new officers on a yearly basis. By officially adopting NFPA 1021 and the IAFC Officer Development Handbook the department will be able to standardize its training by utilizing practice based learning in comparison to nationally recognized best practices within the fire service.

The theory of practiced based learning is utilized in the private and public sector organizations and is used widely in the medical profession as a means to provide excellent care. The concept involves looking at national standards of care and designing your system around the

best practices utilized in your field. This requires constant reflection on your services and a great deal of trust from your organizational team. The trust factor is that your members do not become static in their development process and that they continue the journey to find and analyze better ways to accomplish the mission. This concept and other leadership philosophies were obtained during a personal conversation with Dr. Peter Deckers, Executive Vice President for Health Affairs and Dean of the School of Medicine at the University of Connecticut in June of 2006. During our discussion, he outlined his leadership philosophy and outlined the 6 Core Competencies of effective leadership. Those competencies are:

- Intelligence or high fund of knowledge in the area involved
- Well developed technical skills
- Professionalism which includes honesty, sense of duty, altruism, equanimity and compassion
- Communication skills
- Systems based practice
- Practice based learning

Like Maxwell and Sanborn, Dr Deckers also identified several qualities that a leader must possess before others will want to follow them as leaders. The idea of professionalism takes on many different meanings when related to a volunteer organization. Some say that a volunteer cannot be a professional because they are not compensated for their work. The notion that receiving a paycheck makes you a professional is as far fetched as believing a title makes you a leader (Sanborn, 2006). Dr Deckers' definition is one of the best as it relates to a volunteer fire department since to be professional you must be honest, have a sense of duty, be willing to sacrifice, have self-control and compassion for others. This definition does not only describe a leader but the life of a firefighter. According to the survey, the leadership has not done well in

this area and was rated with an “F” as it related to how they treat the members. According to Sanborn’s concept of ROI, in this lies one of the leadership’s greatest opportunities to make a difference with its members.

While dealing with the concept of professionalism, which is one of the AVFD core values, the curriculum development team needs to identify the other leadership qualities that it would like to stress during the mentoring process. According to the survey and Maxwell’s 21 indispensable qualities, the AVFD membership should focus on the following qualities:

- Communication – Both internal and external relationship need to be built on a foundation of trust and two-way interaction. To inspire others you must be able to articulate your vision so people will want to follow you.
- Generosity – It is important to remember that your candle loses nothing when it lights others around you (Maxwell, 1999). Be grateful for what you have and put your people first.
- Initiative – You must be willing to take risk; be willing to fail but learn from your failures.
- Listening – All good leaders need to remember that they have two ears and one mouth so that they can listen twice as much as they speak. “A good leader encourages followers to tell him what he needs to know, not what he wants to hear (Maxwell, 1999).
- Positive Attitude – Leaders need to remember three things: attitude is a choice, maintaining a positive attitude is much easier than regaining it, and finally followers are a mirror of the leader’s attitude.

- Self-discipline – Remembering that you need to be able to lead yourself first is crucial. You need to develop and follow your priorities, challenge your excuses and do not reward yourself until the job is done.
- Responsibility - An individual who is responsible is driven by excellence, will get the job done regardless of the situation, and willing to go the extra mile for the organization. This type of leader will inspire others based on positive results.
- Servanthood – This is a trait that describes a leader who puts others ahead of the leader's own agenda and is secure enough to serve others. This individual cannot be focused on a title or position. Remembering that true leadership is not measured in what you achieved but what you gave (Sanborn, 2006).

All of these traits were summed up by Dr. Deckers in four simple words Love, Power, Authorship and Celebration. You must love your profession and its people but your compassion for your followers must be authentic. Power refers to your influence and how you relate to those that work with you, not for you. When a leader gives power away, it returned often ten fold. The delegation or decentralization of authority empowers the employee to be held accountable and will enable them to accomplish great things. Finally every leader must celebrate the successes of others and be available to provide support along the way for those who do not succeed at first. If the AVFD leaders understand and practice these qualities in their daily lives there is nothing that cannot be accomplished.

Like Dr. Deckers, Steve Farber (2004) also developed a leadership model known as the Radical LEAP using the four principals or traits of Love, Energy, Audacity, and Proof. Farber felt that without the calling and commitment of your heart, love, there is no good reason to take a

stand, to take a risk or to do what it takes to change the world. If you aspire to lead people you must make celebration a habit and not an assignment.

Energy is an inherent power “a powerful force for action, for progress, and an enthusiastic believer in people and their capacity to do the awesome” (Faber, 2004, pp. 167). Find the sources of energy that motivate you to do your best and motivate others to do the same. To this end, the AVFD leadership needs to develop guiding values that are supported by concrete goals and objectives. To be an extreme leader in the AVFD, one cannot just meet the minimum standards but must focus on developing energy to define higher ones and then set goals to reach them.

Inspiring audacity requires the leader to look outside of normal constraints placed on you by others and develop your skills of thinking outside the box. The main goal of the audacious leader is to serve the command good not ones own ego. The AVFD leadership needs to look at other volunteer organizations and learn to think globally. They must ask the question “how are we going to change the world” and then start at a level where they can make a difference.

Proof is the final trait that must be displayed by the extreme leader. Providing proof boils down to your character and you must be someone that can be trusted. Your word is only as good as your actions. Accountability was listed as one of the 5 greatest weakness of the AVFD leadership so providing proof is one opportunity for change that can not be overlooked. According to Sanborn this will definitely increase your ROI.

When looking at comparing the fire service to the public sector many firefighters will argue that the fire service should not be compared to business but there are many similarities especially in the area of leadership development. The fire service uses the National Incident Management System (NIMS) to establish a command structure at all incidents and the business

industry uses this same concept to identify an organizational structure. The main difference is the titles used in the organizational charts. At all levels on the charts a leader or manager is running the show. The similarities do not stop with the organizational charts. Like the business sector, the fire service needs to develop and promote individuals to take charge of different organizational demands. However, according to the Wingspread Conference – *Statements of National Significance to the Fire Problem in the United States*, the need to develop leaders is not unique to the fire service and has drawn attention since 1966 (IAFC, 2003). There have been 4 conferences since 1966 during which time the concept of effective leadership has been a main focal point. As far back as 1966, it was identified that the practice of promoting personnel into higher ranks and then attempting to train them was not only ineffective but potentially dangerous in the fire service. The AVFD has been following this type of leadership development since its inception. It was also acknowledged at the conference that this promotional strategy is in direct contrast with standard practices in virtually all other professions. Not only does the AVFD need to develop its officers prior to promotion it must develop a system based practice that will realign, to the best extent possible, a reliance on systems instead of individuals. Failure to adopt such a practice will keep the organization, as a whole, at Maxwell's first level of leadership and this will amplify existing problems with low morale and increase membership turnover.

The research identified that not only do the members of the AVFD desire some type of leadership training but the best way to present it will be through the development of the LEAD institute. To create a program of leadership, education and development the curriculum development team can follow the success of the Alexandria Virginia Fire Department and create a program that incorporates into the annual training cycle not only tactical considerations but other topics such as interpersonal dynamics, character development and department specific

issues (Hawkins, 2000). The curriculum should be coupled with the IAFC Officer Development handbook so that students can adopt a personal plan of development outside of the classroom and energize their personal and professional growth.

The research identified two major limitations that might hinder the use of the LEAD institute as an officer development strategy. Currently the AVFD votes in the leadership on an annual basis. Many of the curriculums were designed with career departments and longevity of service in mind. The potential for turnover is much higher in volunteer organizations and the time to properly train and educate new leaders is not always available. Hildy Gottlieb (2006) addresses this concern by highlighting that it is always the leadership's responsibility, in every type of organization, to make sure that the proper safeguards are in place prior to a key figure leaving an organization or being voted out of position. To accomplish this, the AVFD board of directors must have a clear vision for the future and a clearly articulated, written set of core values that will guide the actions and future decision making. As it relates to the AVFD, the operational piece of this succession plan is making sure that the following safeguards are in place; current job descriptions for all critical positions have been updated, a task list is developed for all key players so everyone knows what each position does for the organization, a calendar of mandatory annual events has been created, a structure to establish positional redundancy, and a means by which to review the system annually and make the appropriate updates. By developing a reliance on systems instead of individuals the AVFD will be able to reduce the negative impact felt in many volunteer organizations when leaders change or leave.

The authors agree that to develop leaders every curriculum must include units that emphasize leadership qualities, the multiple roles officers' play in the organization, decisive decision making skills, and the need to give personally in the development of others so the

AVFD can fulfill its mission. The process must include not only classroom training techniques but a combination of education and real-world experiences. An interactive approach to education is required and every pupil must understand that a personal commitment to life long self development is mandatory. The leadership journey does not end on the day of your promotion. As William G. Maritime, the fictional character from the Radical Leap declared, to be an extreme leader you must continue to “Do what you love in the service of people who love what you do” (Farber, 2004).

Recommendations

From the research performed and the conclusions drawn from the survey, I would propose that the AVFD make the following organizational and operational changes:

Short-Term

1. Meet with the leadership to review survey results and provide strategies to increase ROI.
2. Immediately adopt organizational structure changes submitted by the Fire Chief to better decentralize authority in the Operations Sector.
3. Adopt the Strategic Planning Leadership Team's recommendation to no longer have a membership vote on officer appointments.
4. Perform a job analysis of all positions within the fire department.
5. Develop promotional criteria that a candidate *must* possess or that are *preferred* prior to being eligible for a position (IAFC, 2003).
6. Review current job descriptions and update to include: job responsibilities, job duties, essential job functions, expected level of performance standard, compensation (benefits of the position), and potential for growth.
7. Use the updated vision and mission statement to develop formal written goals and objectives that support all decision making.

Long-Term

1. Establish a curriculum development team to create a LEAD institute in the AVFD.
2. Develop safeguards that will help transfer organizational reliance from individuals to a system based practice atmosphere.
3. Monitor all programs at least yearly, with an emphasis on redefining and augmenting as appropriate, to thereby continuously ensure a practice based learning environment.

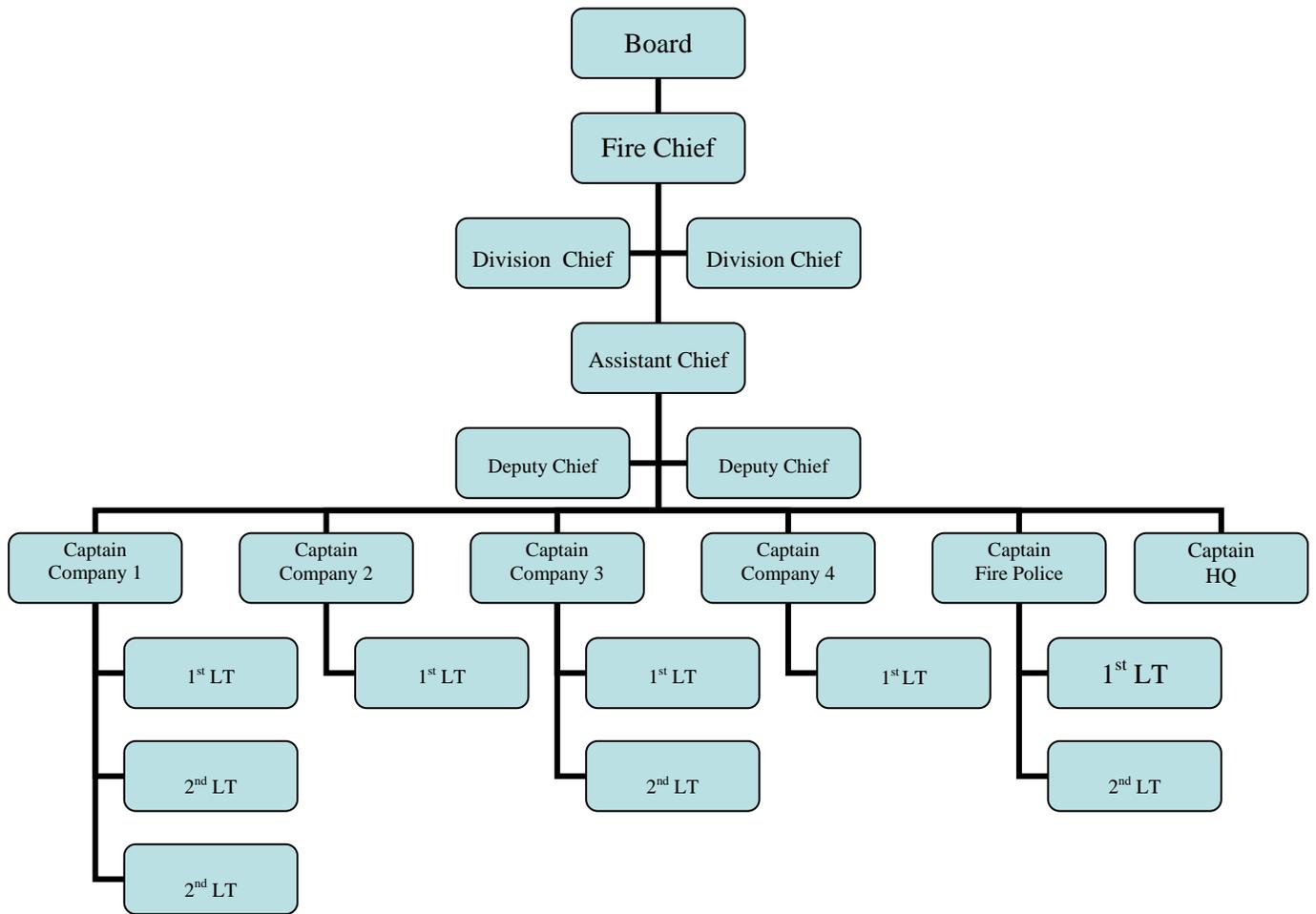
Future leaders and department members need to make sure that they continue to avail themselves of all types of education, and training. Aspiring leaders, remember that professional development is a journey that is not solely about certifications and degrees or resume building. It is about the lives we have touched and the differences we have made in the world – our legacies.

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Appendix A (Organizational Structure)



Appendix B (Leadership Survey Directions - Email)

Greetings

As I mentioned at the March Monthly meeting, I am in the process of finishing my last year in the Executive Fire Officer Program at the National Fire Academy and the final requirement is the completion of a research paper dealing with Executive Leadership. I have decided to write my last paper on how to develop technically competent firefighters into great leaders. The main focus of this report will be on the development of leadership training programs and what modules to include.

However, to begin the development process I need to establish the current department perception of the existing leadership and if they are meeting your expectations. To accomplish this baseline I am asking that you take a few minutes of your time and complete the EFO Survey that I have developed. I am looking for as much feedback as possible and think it will be extremely valuable to my research. Also, this is a great opportunity for you to be involved in the development of the program.

This is an online survey that can be completed from any computer that has internet access.

Steps:

1. PLEASE ONLY COMPLETE THIS SURVEY **ONCE**
2. Open your internet browser and enter the following address in the address bar (or just click on the link): <http://training.avonvfd.org/lxrweb/online/efosurvey/webtest1.asp>
3. You will then be directed to our testing site on the World Wide Web.
4. A log on screen asking for your name will open and you need to put your name into this field.
NOTE: if you choose to complete this survey in an anonymous format then enter the following name in the field "AVFD member". If you enter your name in this field rest assured that only the results of the survey will be published in the report and no one will ever be given your name. I would like to have people enter their names so that during the development process, we can better address your concerns and if additional clarification is needed we can contact the correct people.
5. Once you enter your name on the first screen and select CONTINUE, it gives you a chance to start the survey or return later. When you begin the survey the first screen will be additional directions of how to take the survey. For help at anytime on how to use this webpage, just click on the HELP button in the lower left hand corner of your screen. This menu will walk you through how to advance or returned to the last question and navigate through survey.

6. After you have entered the last answer, click on the COVER button and this will allow you to submit the survey. Please make sure to log off the webpage as directed.

Again, I want to thank you for your time and your commitment to making the AVFD a better department.

Respectfully,

John Deckers

Appendix C (Leadership Survey)

EFO Survey

Name: _____

Please take this survey and answer all the questions looking at the leadership as a whole and do not base your opinion on one individual.

The final question in the survey is an open comment field so that you can make any remarks to clarify any of your answers or to provide additional feedback.

Thank you for taking the time to help me and the AVFD with this research project.

1. How many years have you been with the AVFD?
 - A. 0 to 5 years
 - B. 6 to 10 years
 - C. 11 to 15 years
 - D. 16 to 20 years
 - E. Over 20 years
2. How many years have you held a leadership role with the AVFD?
 - A. None
 - B. 1 to 5 years
 - C. 6 to 10 years
 - D. over 10 years
3. Do you currently hold any of the positions list below in the AVFD?
 - A. Line officer
 - B. Board member
 - C. Both Line and Board
 - D. None

4. What is your current line rank in the AVFD?
 - A. Chief level officer
 - B. Captain
 - C. Lieutenant
 - D. Firefighter
 - E. Non-firefighter (Veteran, Life or Associate)

5. Select the highest position you have held on the Board
 - A. President
 - B. Vice-President
 - C. Treasurer or Secretary
 - D. Board Director
 - E. None

6. Select the highest position you have held as a line officer
 - A. Chief or Assistant Chief
 - B. Deputy Chief or Division Chief
 - C. Captain
 - D. Lieutenant
 - E. None

7. In your non-AVFD career do you supervise others?
 - A. Yes
 - B. No

8. Do you feel that you can be taught to be a good leader?
 - A. Yes
 - B. No

9. Do you believe that you must have a title to be a leader?

A. Yes

B. No

10. Do you feel that the AVFD has prepared you to lead in your current position?

A. Yes

B. No

C. I feel my current position does not fall into a leadership role

11. In your opinion what are the top 5 greatest weaknesses of the AVFD leadership?

A. Communications

B. Accountability

C. Experience (Technical Competence)

D. Vision

E. Maintains Technical Knowledge

F. Follow through

G. Applying rules fairly

H. Arrogance of Ego

I. Focus

J. Micro-managing

K. Integrity

L. Managing conflict

M. Active listening

N. Flexibility

O. Insecurity

P. Does not make value driven decisions

Q. Commitment to Quality

R. Providing Recognition

S. Empowerment

T. Teamwork

12. Do you feel that you have a say in the direction of the department?

A. Yes

B. No

Definition:

Command authority - the rights given to you by the Fire Chief to exercise direct control over others in your company or on the fireground.

****NOTE: Do NOT think about one individual, look at the department as a whole.**

13. Why do you follow the orders of your department officers?

A. They have earned my respect

B. Because of their command authority

14. Are AVFD members empowered to make independent decisions?

A. Yes

B. No

15. I feel that my input is valued by the AVFD leadership

A. Yes

B. No

16. Are AVFD members afraid to question the decisions of superiors?

A. Yes

B. No

17. Do you believe that the AVFD has a clear vision, mission and obtainable goals?

A. Yes

B. No

18. Select the best answer: I feel that my leadership training has

A. been best supplied by life experiences

B. been gained by attending outside training programs

C. been adequately supplied by the department

The following questions will be used to rate how you perceive that the current leadership performs in the listed area.

Please rate from:

Poor - needs more training

Excellent - no additional training required.

Please remember this is an overall perspective not a rating of one individual.

19. ACCOUNTABILITY - Is held accountable for actions

- A. Poor
- B. Fair
- C. Good
- D. Very Good
- E. Excellent

20. ACCOUNTABILITY - Holds subordinates accountable

- A. Poor
- B. Fair
- C. Good
- D. Very Good
- E. Excellent

21. SELF-DISCIPLINE - Stays focused on results

- A. Poor
- B. Fair
- C. Good
- D. Very Good
- E. Excellent

22. PROFESSIONALISM - When dealing with public

- A. Poor
- B. Fair
- C. Good
- D. Very Good
- E. Excellent

23. PROFESSIONALISM - When dealing with department members

- A. Poor
- B. Fair
- C. Good
- D. Very Good
- E. Excellent

24. ATTITUDE - Towards other AVFD members

- A. Poor
- B. Fair
- C. Good
- D. Very Good
- E. Excellent

25. ATTITUDE - about the department

- A. Poor
- B. Fair
- C. Good
- D. Very Good
- E. Excellent

26. COMPETENCY - Policy & Procedures

- A. Poor
- B. Fair
- C. Good
- D. Very Good
- E. Excellent

27. LISTENING - Actively listens to others

- A. Poor
- B. Fair
- C. Good
- D. Very Good
- E. Excellent

28. COURAGE - Willing to take on the important battles

- A. Poor
- B. Fair
- C. Good
- D. Very Good
- E. Excellent

29. CHARISMA - The ability to attract others

- A. Poor
- B. Fair
- C. Good
- D. Very Good
- E. Excellent

30. LEADERSHIP - Displays Confidence

- A. Poor
- B. Fair
- C. Good
- D. Very Good
- E. Excellent

31. LEADERSHIP - Leads by example

- A. Poor
- B. Fair
- C. Good
- D. Very Good
- E. Excellent

32. INTEGRITY - Trustful and honest

- A. Poor
- B. Fair
- C. Good
- D. Very Good
- E. Excellent

33. DECISIVENESS - Non-emergency issues

- A. Poor
- B. Fair
- C. Good
- D. Very Good
- E. Excellent

34. DECISIVENESS - Emergency scene

- A. Poor
- B. Fair
- C. Good
- D. Very Good
- E. Excellent

35. COMPETENCY - Training and drilling

- A. Poor
- B. Fair
- C. Good
- D. Very Good
- E. Excellent

36. COMPETENCY - Interpersonal Dynamics

- A. Poor
- B. Fair
- C. Good
- D. Very Good
- E. Excellent

37. COMPETENCY - Firefighting knowledge

- A. Poor
- B. Fair
- C. Good
- D. Very Good
- E. Excellent

38. What skills and traits do you feel should be stressed and developed in the leadership training program (Pick your top 10)?

- | | |
|--------------------------|---------------------------|
| A. Accountability | K. Courage |
| B. Responsible | L. Commitment |
| C. Integrity | M. Effective Communicator |
| D. Motivating | N. Generosity |
| E. Decisiveness | O. Initiative |
| F. Technically Competent | P. Positive Attitude |
| G. Initiative | Q. Servant hood |
| H. Good Listener | R. Vision |
| I. Confident | S. Professionalism |
| J. Ethical | T. Intelligence |

39. What training or experience should a Board member possess prior to being appointed (Select Top 10)

- | | |
|------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| A. Budgeting | I. Basic computer courses |
| B. Accounting Principals | J. Research techniques |
| C. Human Resource Management | K. Ethics |
| D. Grant writing | L. Planning |
| E. Introduction to Politics | M. Change Management |
| F. Conflict resolution | N. Customer Service |
| G. Disaster Management | O. Communications written and oral |
| H. NIMS courses | |

40. What training or experience should an Officer have prior to being appointed (Select top 10)
- A. Budgeting
 - B. Problem solving
 - C. Human Resource Management
 - D. NFIRS
 - E. Training & Presentation Skills
 - F. Organizational Policy & Procedures
 - G. Disaster Management
 - H. NIMS courses
 - I. Basic computer courses
 - J. Fire Investigation
 - K. Ethics
 - L. CPR & AED
 - M. Diversity/Harassment Training
 - N. Customer Service
 - O. Communications both written and oral
 - P. Emergency Scene Operations
41. Is there a difference between Management and Leadership?
- A. Yes
 - B. No
42. In your own words describe Management
43. In your own words describe Leadership
44. Should the AVFD create a leadership training program?
- A. Yes
 - B. No
45. Who should be included in the training?
- A. Officers only - after appointment
 - B. Potential Officers - prior to appointment (Leadership Recruit School)
 - C. All department members
 - D. Officers and Board members only
 - E. There is no need for this type of training

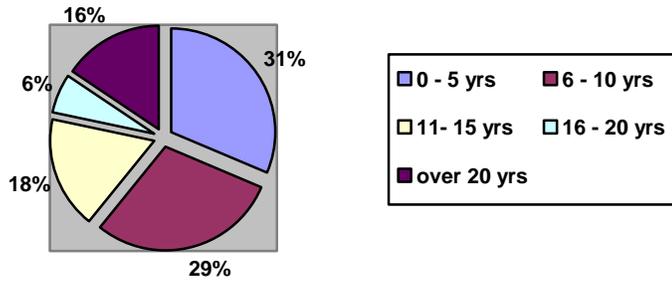
46. The AVFD leadership program should focus on

- A. more strategies and tactics
- B. more interpersonal dynamics
- C. emphasis on interpersonal dynamics and an introduction to incident operations
- D. emphasis on incident operations and an introduction to interpersonal dynamics
- E. There is no need for this type of training program

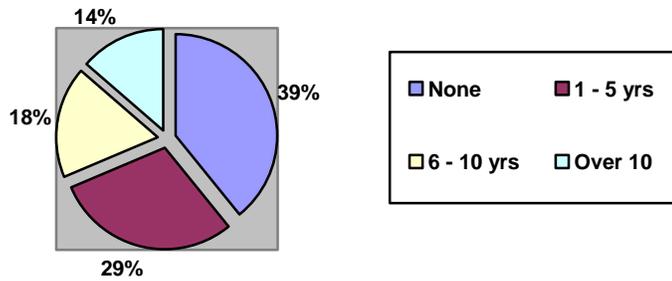
47. Please provide any additional comments or remarks about the AVFD leadership or the creation of a leadership program below. Please limit your response to 255 characters.

Appendix D (Leadership Survey Results)

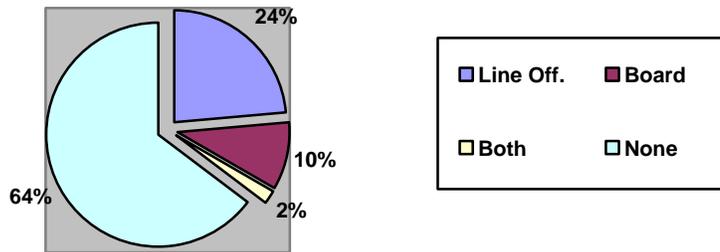
1. How many years have you been with the AVFD?



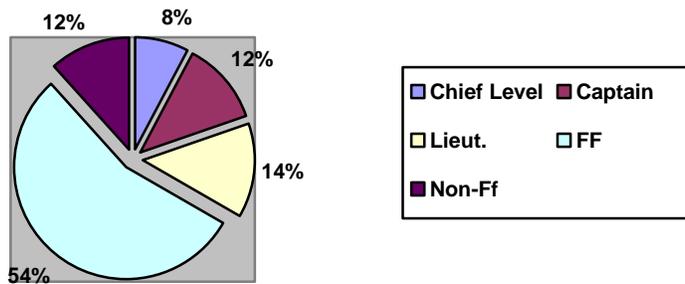
2. How many years have you held a leadership role with the AVFD?



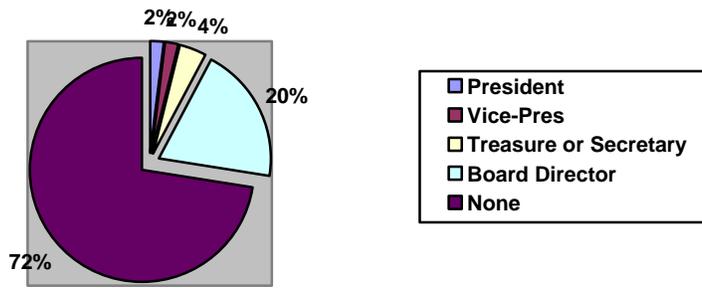
3. Do you currently hold any of the positions list below in the AVFD?



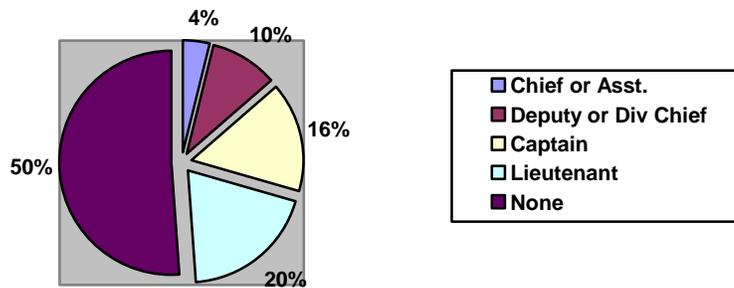
4. What is your current line rank in the AVFD?



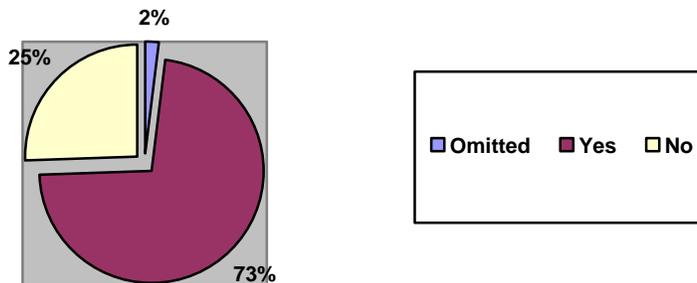
5. Select the highest position you have held on the Board



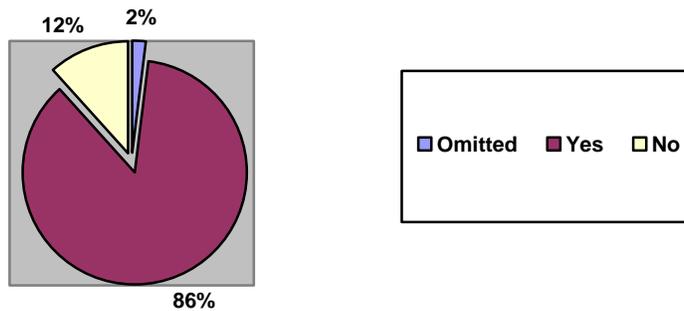
6. Select the highest position you have held as a line officer



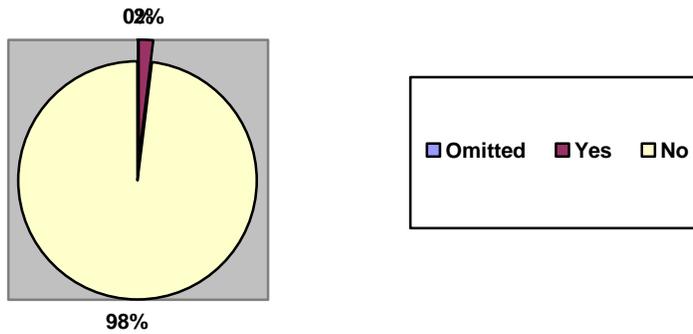
7. In your non-AVFD career do you supervise others?



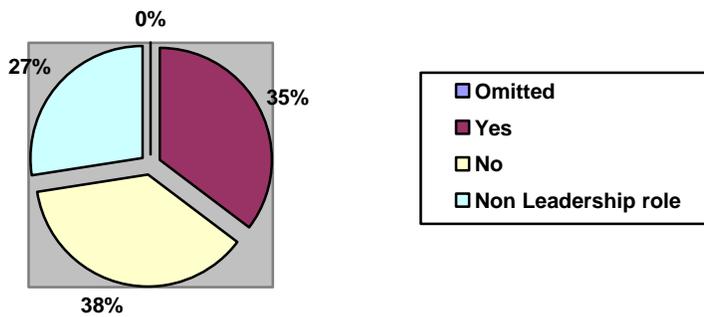
8. Do you feel that you can be taught to be a good leader?



9. Do you believe that you must have a title to be a leader?



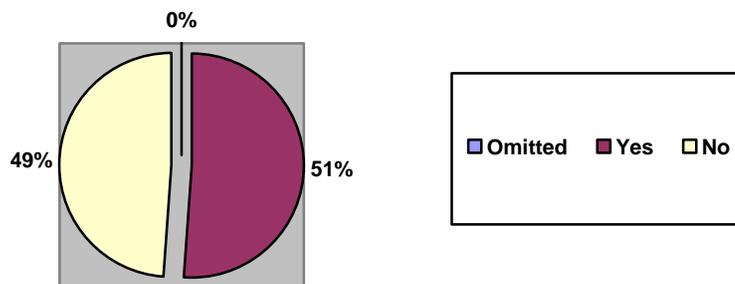
10. Do you feel that the AVFD has prepared you to lead in your current position?



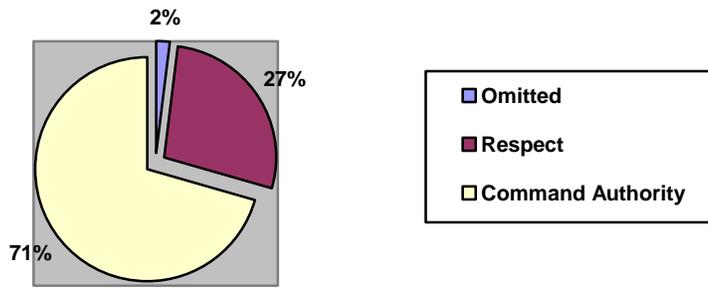
11. In your opinion what are the top 5 greatest weaknesses of the AVFD leadership?

- | | | | |
|--------------------------|-----|---------------------|-----|
| 1. Communications | 65% | 4. Follow through | 45% |
| 2. Applying rules fairly | 55% | 5. Arrogance of Ego | 39% |
| 3. Accountability | 51% | | |

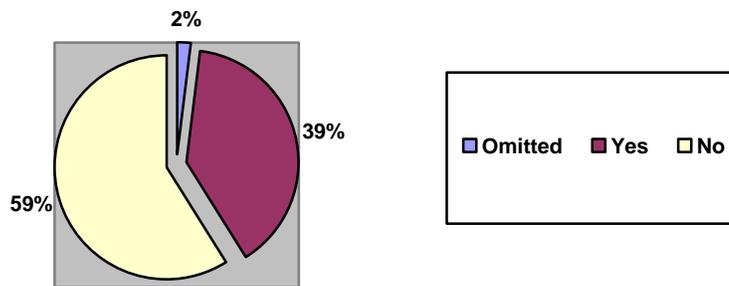
12. Do you feel that you have a say in the direction of the department?



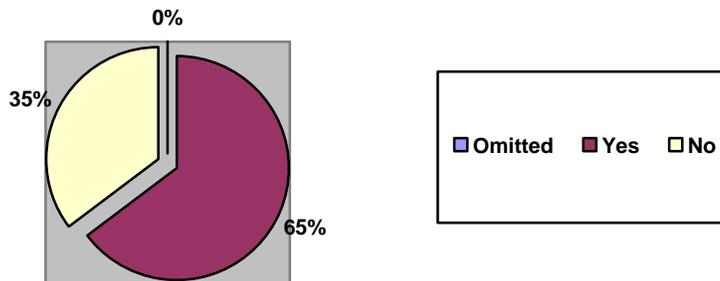
13. Why do you follow the orders of your department officers?



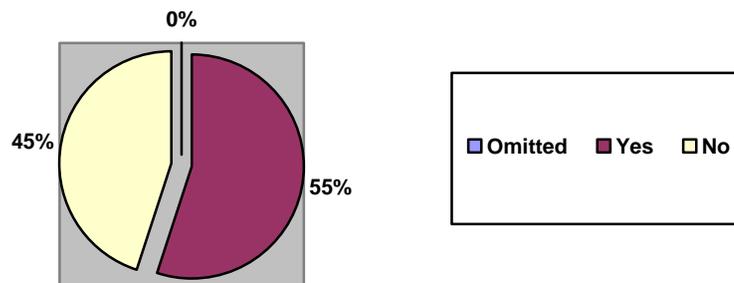
14. Are AVFD members empowered to make independent decisions?



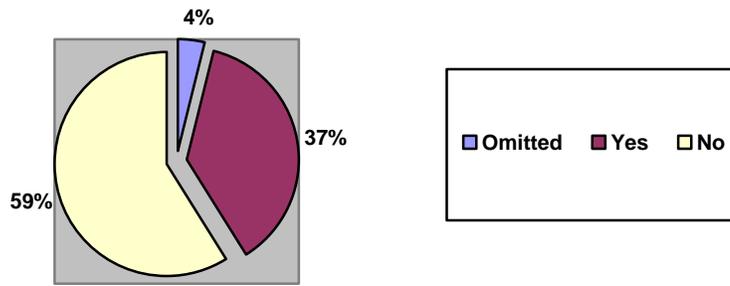
15. I feel that my input is valued by the AVFD leadership



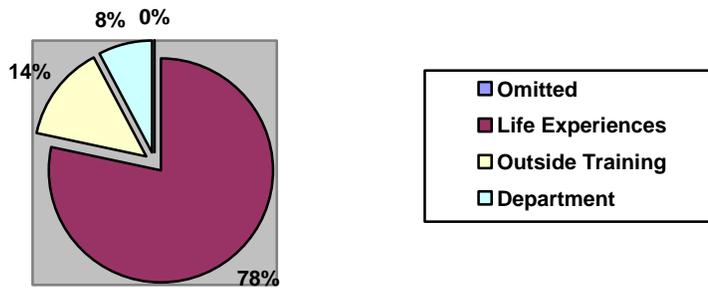
16. Are AVFD members afraid to question the decisions of superiors?



17. Do you believe that the AVFD has a clear vision, mission and obtainable goals?



18. Select the best answer: I feel that my leadership training has



EFO Survey Results - Traits Analysis (Questions 19 – 37)

Poor	0	F
Fair	50	D
Good	65	C
Very Good	80	B
Excellent	100	A

#	TRAIT	OMIT	Poor	Fair	Good	Very Good	Excellent	Responses	Overall	Grade
19	Accountability	0	9	26	11	3	2	51	48	F
20	Accountability	0	10	24	11	6	0	51	47	F
21	Self Discipline	1	4	19	22	4	1	50	55	D
22	Professionalism	0	2	14	9	18	8	51	69	C
23	Professionalism	0	11	16	15	8	1	51	49	F
24	Attitude	0	5	19	15	11	1	51	57	D
25	Attitude	0	1	15	18	14	3	51	65	D
26	Competency	0	9	15	16	10	1	51	53	D
27	Listening	0	9	18	19	5	0	51	50	D
28	Courage	1	8	18	14	7	3	50	52	D
29	Charisma	0	7	23	16	5	0	51	51	D
30	Leadership	0	5	12	16	16	2	51	61	D
31	Leadership	0	13	9	22	5	2	51	49	F
32	Integrity	1	5	9	19	11	6	50	62	D
33	Decisiveness	0	10	12	19	9	1	51	52	D
34	Decisiveness	1	0	8	15	19	8	50	72	C
35	Competency	1	1	14	16	17	2	50	65	D
36	Competency	1	11	21	12	6	0	50	45	F
37	Competency	1	0	6	12	24	8	50	75	C

Overall Leadership Grade

57

D

38. What skills and traits do you feel should be stressed and developed in the leadership training program (Pick your top 10)?

1. Effective Communicator	88%	6. Motivating	73%
2. Professionalism	78%	7. Integrity	69%
3. Positive Attitude	75%	8. Good Listener	61%
4. Accountability	73%	9. Decisiveness	51%
5. Responsible	73%	10. Ethical	49%

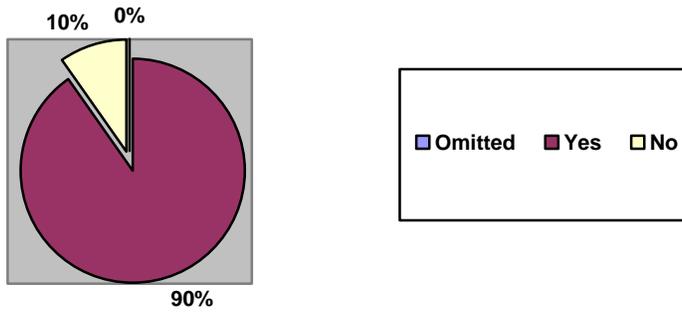
39. What training or experience should a Board member possess prior to being appointed (Select Top 10)?

Communications	88%	Research techniques	47%
Ethics	86%	Introduction to Politics	33%
Planning	84%		
Conflict resolution	82%		
Human Resource Mgmt	78%		
Budgeting	76%		
Customer Service	71%		
Change Management	59%		

40. What training or experience should an Officer have prior to being appointed (Select top 10)?

Emergency Scene Ops	92%	Human Resource Mgmt	76%
Communications	88%	Diversity Training	75%
Problem solving	86%	Ethics	71%
Training & Presentation	86%	Customer Service	69%
Org. Policy & Procedures	80%	Disaster Mgmt & NIMS	47%

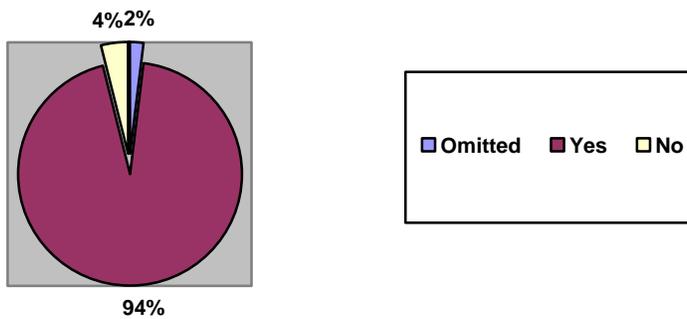
41. Is there a difference between Management and Leadership?



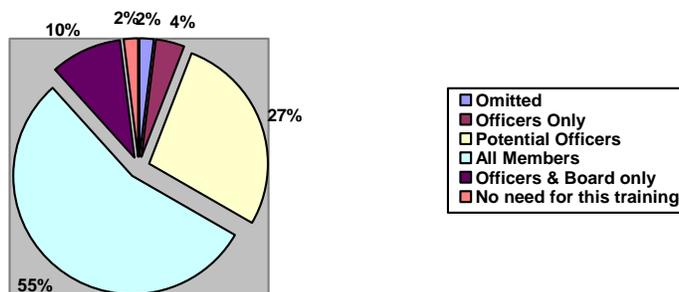
42. In your own words describe Management – See Results Section for analysis

43. In your own words describe Leadership – See Results Section for analysis

44. Should the AVFD create a leadership training program?



45. Who should be included in the training?



46. The AVFD leadership program should focus on

1 person omitted their answer

A. more strategies and tactics

(Zero or 0%)

B. more interpersonal dynamics

(16 or 31%)

C. emphasis on interpersonal dynamics and an introduction to incident operations

(26 or 51%)

D. emphasis on incident operations and an introduction to interpersonal dynamics

(8 or 16%)

E. There is no need for this type of training program

(Zero or 0%)

47. Please provide any additional comments or remarks about the AVFD leadership or the creation of a leadership program below. Please limit your response to 255 characters. **See**

Results Section for Summary