MORALE MATTERS

EXECUTIVE DEVELOPMENT

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ABSTRACT

The issue addressed was low morale in the Memphis Fire Department (MFD), especially as it pertains to reductions in both employee productivity and personal growth. The purpose of this research was to determine if the MFD suffers from low morale, and how increasing morale may increase employee productivity and personal growth.

Descriptive research methods were utilized to answer the following questions:

1. What is the morale level in the Memphis Fire Department?
2. How does low morale affect employee productivity and personal growth?
3. Which specific factors trigger a decrease in employee morale?
4. What specific methods improve employee morale?

A literature review was conducted to determine what data was available to support the research questions. Interviews were conducted with five leaders of the MFD to supplement the literature review. A survey was conducted to determine the level of morale on the MFD. A questionnaire was given to Battalion Chiefs to determine how low morale affects employee productivity and personal growth on the MFD.

The results show that the administration felt that morale was good but the labor organizations felt that morale was poor. Overall, 57.5% of the surveyed group felt that morale was low or moderately low. The literature review and questionnaire revealed that low morale reduces productivity and hinders personal growth.

Specific factors that trigger a decrease in employee morale include, but are not limited to, poor leadership, diversity issues, poor advancement opportunities, and lack of employees recognition. Methods that may improve employee morale include: valuing diversity, praising employees and showing gratitude, enhancing leadership skills through
training, and organizing morale committees.

Recommendations made to the MFD are to conduct further research to identify why the employee morale is low. Administration should then address these issues by implementing programs to improve leadership, human relations, and esprit de corps.
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INTRODUCTION

The Memphis Fire Department consists of 1640 personnel in eight bureaus. The Fire suppression bureau consists of 13 battalions on three shifts; therefore, there are 39 different Battalion Chiefs with 39 different management styles. This causes discipline, expected performance and even advancement opportunities to be inconsistent. It is the author’s position that, in large part, these inconsistencies cause morale to be low in the Memphis Fire Department.

The problem is that low morale in the Memphis Fire Department may be leading to reductions in both employee productivity and personal growth. The purpose of this research is to determine if in fact the MFD does suffer from low morale, and if so how could increasing morale increase employee productivity and personal growth.

Descriptive research method will be utilized to answer the following research questions:

1. What is the morale level in the Memphis Fire Department?
2. How does low morale affect employee productivity and personal growth?
3. Which specific factors trigger a decrease in employee morale?
4. What specific methods improve employee morale?

The author suggests that by determining which specific factors contribute to low morale, one might determine how a subsequent alteration of these factors would improve employee morale. Improved employee morale may also motivate employees to enhance their personal growth, making the Memphis Fire Department a safer and more enjoyable place in which to work.
BACKGROUND AND SIGNIFICANCE

The issue of morale on the Memphis Fire Department has been a concern for several years. In June of 1978, the union members struck and left the City of Memphis without effective fire service for three days; in August of the same year union members walked out for five days. The union gained nothing and hundreds of thousands of dollars of property were lost to fire. This caused department morale to sink to a new low.

In 1996, the MFD cross-trained all paramedics that were already employees to become fire fighters. Morale among fire fighters not to mention fire fighter paramedics dropped again. Fire fighters felt like their territory was being invaded by paramedics who did not have to go through the same hiring procedures that they had to go through. They also did not and still do not like the fact that a paramedic replaced a position on the equipment that was previously staffed by a fire fighter. Cross training was not popular with paramedics either. They did not have a choice to cross-train or not. They had to go through fire training just as though they were new recruits and were treated as such by several instructors. Though the situation has greatly improved, there still exists a division between paramedics and fire fighters. The time and energy taken to discuss and deal with morale matters is costly.

The purpose of this research is to determine if the MFD suffers from low morale, and how increasing morale may increase employee productivity and personal growth. Increasing productivity and personal growth will save life and property. For example, the more productive a crew is in their fire management zone, then the more smoke detectors that can be hung. By attending fire science courses or hands on training, a member of the MFD will increase his/her knowledge and skill that can and will pay off on the fire
This research project relates to Unit 6 “Labor Relations” in the National Fire Academy’s Executive Development course. The objective in Unit 6 is to analyze approaches to problem solving in labor-management relation’s issues (NFA, 1998, p. SM 6-2). A key to raising morale is to improve relationships between labor and management.

This project also relates to three of the four United States Fire Administration’s operational objectives: “reduce the loss or life from fire in the age group 14 years old and below… reduce the loss or life from fire in the age group 65 years old and above … and reduce the loss or life from fire of fire fighters” (U.S. Fire Administration National Fire Academy --Applied Research Guidelines 2002, p. II-2). Increasing one’s knowledge, skills, and productivity in the fire service will save both firefighter and civilian lives.

**LITERATURE REVIEW**

A literature review was conducted to determine what data is available to support the following research questions: What is the morale level in the Memphis Fire Department? Does low morale affect employee productivity and personal growth? Which specific factors trigger a decrease in employee morale? Through research, the author attempted to identify specific methods that improve employee morale. Research was conducted at the Learning Resource Center at the National Fire Academy, the Memphis and Shelby County Public Library, The Internet and through interviews.

In an article for *Fire Chief Magazine* Deputy Chief Monica Morgan from the San Diego Fire Department discussed what impact diversity has on the fire service. Negative consequences brought on by not recognizing and responding to diversity issues include lower employee satisfaction, commitment and performance, high turnover rate,
absenteeism, and diminished work quality. Fully using all employees will increase performance and productivity. “Employee performance, morale and success ultimately will depend on how we manage the changing demographics of our current and future work force” (Morgan 2002, ¶7).

“The Young and the Restless,” an article for *Fire Chief Magazine* written by Bruce Martin about Generation X’ers and Generation Y points out what causes morale to drop in the younger work force.

Explicit expectations provide a set of benchmarks for you and they provide a target for employees. When employees don’t know what’s required of them, morale issues begin as people push attention away from themselves in an effort to define their own standards (Martin, 2000, ¶30).

Effective supervisors should always let employees know what is expected of them.

A manager who does nothing to motivate employees has stagnant morale and employees only expect feedback when they have done something wrong. “Every agency has morale problems from time to time. So think about recognizing your employees. Be creative. Anything you do to tell your staff you appreciate them will go a long way” (Hagstrom, 2000, p.12).

Cheryl Salerno’s (2001) article in *Contingency Planning & Management* states that there many reasons for poor morale. For one employees may want more recognition or interaction with people. Others may be bored with their day-to-day tasks. A lack of trust towards one’s supervisors is another factor. Discontentment among staff members can lower productivity levels and raise absenteeism. Some mitigation measures she
suggests are to … “(a) be aware of the morale level, (b) praise for work well done, (c) generate a sense of team work and (d) maintain an open door policy” (2001, p. 46).

Richard B. Arwood retired Division Chief of MFD and current Assistant Chief of the Collierville, TN Fire department, in 1981 wrote a paper for his senior project at then Memphis State University titled “Management Techniques for the Memphis Fire Department”. The paper discusses events that led to personnel problems in 1981. Chief Arwood (1981) stated that “The central source of low departmental morale is the fact that this department has not properly valued the resource within its workers” (p. iii). In his research, he obtained a copy of an employee attitude survey administered in 1968. Communications, human relations, discipline, pay, and promotions were found to be problem areas in 1968. Arwood designed a new survey asking exactly the same questions that were in the old survey. The results were similar, “major morale and job satisfaction problems were evident” (1981, p. 4). He felt that a management-training program would help address the problem. “…. Well trained supervisors, ideally, motivate subordinates into higher performance and productivity levels” (1981, p. 6).

Low morale is evident in an employee’s behavior, attitude, and low performance therefore effecting productivity. “Acknowledging management’s responsibility for morale and turnover opens the door to creative solutions” (Hacker, 2000, Preface p. xvii). Management that has confidence in their employees will encourage them to take on challenges including furthering their education. “Anything a manager does to foster positive results will bring a certain amount of healthy self-respect to the work place and that leads to heightened morale and reduced turnover (2000, p. 66).
In Greg H. Neely’s Executive Fire Officer (EFO) applied research paper *The Relationship Between Employee Morale And Employee Productivity* (1999), he concluded that morale has a direct impact on productivity therefore by increasing morale you may increase productivity. He gave the following measures to improve morale: “positive reinforcement, employee input, feedback, and empowerment” (1999, p. 11).

*The secret of a Winning Culture Building High-Performance Teams*, written by Larry E. Senn and John R. Childress, recognizes the significance of identifying the corporate culture. Problems in organizations may revolve around the culture not the system. In these cases one needs to change the culture. Through motivation one may be able to change the culture. People want to know what they do is important and to see results. They want to get recognition, respect and empowerment. They also want to be challenged to learn and grow. “A high-performance organization is one in which individuals encourage each other to expand their knowledge, increase their productivity, and reach their potential” (Senn and Childress, 1999, p.109).

An employee not confident in their job performance is big morale crusher. “…Make sure employees are sufficiently trained, so they can be confident about doing their jobs well” (Bruce, 2003, p. 3). Encourage and give employees opportunities to continue to train. “Smart leaders know that employee incentives and a promise for personal growth and development are the best motivators” (Bruce, 2003, p. 71). Creating a sense of unity in an organization can also help build morale. Let employees know administrators care by listening to them and sharing experiences. Bruce gives the following steps to create a high-spirited morale-booster: “1. Become a genuine and authentic manager; 2. Tune into the emotional needs of you employees; 3. Generate a
spirit of gratitude; 4. Spread contagious enthusiasm wherever you go; 5. Treat employees as humans not just workers.” (2003, p. 6-8).

A tactic for combating falling morale is to organize committees to uncover morale problems. A Salt Lake City, Utah company had significant improvement after developing the committee known as the “morale doctors.” A company in Dallas created a “Culture Council.” The council’s job was to crush out negativity and spread positive and success stories throughout the company with innovative or creative ideas. They were so successful that branches nation wide started there own “Culture Councils.”

Managers’ strategies of maintaining high morale are fairly basic: (1) Instill confidence in your employees; (2) Give recognition when recognition is due; (3) Recognize when morale drops and do something about it; (4) Be open, honest and most importantly listen. The One Minute Manager puts managing in easy and practical terms. The ABC’s of management are “A = Activators, B = Behavior, and C = Consequences” (Blanchard & Lorber, 1984, p. 24). First - set goals, second - do your job, and last - praise or reprimand depending on the performance. People want to know what you want them to do, let them do it, and let them know how there doing.

Managing Human Resources, Productivity, Quality of work Life, Profits written by Wayne F. Cascio discusses the quality of work life (QWL).

There are two ways of looking at what QWL means. One way equates QWL with a set of objective organizational conditions and practices (e.g., promotion- from-within policies, democratic supervision, employee involvement, and safe working conditions). The other way equates QWL with employee perceptions that they
are safe, relatively well satisfied, and able to grow and develop as human beings. (Cascio, 1995, p. 23).

QWL gives employees ownership in the business by allowing them to participate equally with management in the decision making that affect their jobs. “The common denominator of QWL experiments is joint worker-management participation for the purpose of identifying problems and opportunities in the work environment, making decisions, and implementing changes” (1995, p. 25). Studies have proven that QWL programs, when implemented correctly, increase productivity.

Career development should be a partnership between a business and the employee. “Psychologically, promotions help satisfy employees’ needs for security, belonging, and personal growth” (Cascio, 1995, p. 327-328). Employees’ commitment often decreases when they are passed over for promotions because they feel cheated. “To minimize defensive behaviors, it is critical that the procedures used for promotion decisions (e.g., assessment centers plus performance appraisals) be acceptable, valid, and fair to the unsuccessful candidates” (1995, p. 328).

Donald P. Ladew (1998) stated that the greatest cause of low morale is failing to give employees recognition (p. 75). “Resentment, low morale, slow-downs, errors, endless gossip, absenteeism, and unexplained illness are all signs that you, or management in general, have been taking your employees for granted” (1998, p. 75). To maintain a high level of morale reward and recognize your employees publicly.

Promotions should also be fair and attainable to all employees. Managers should encourage and help employee to move up the ladder of success. “…Give every person on your staff and opportunity to ‘shine’ rather than giving the plum assignments to the same
people again and again” (Ladew, 1998, p. 87). Give all employees opportunities to increase their knowledge and skills. Encourage employees to set goals and reach them.

**Interviews**

Interviews with five leaders within the MFD were conducted to supplement the literature review and to answer the research questions. Interviews were conducted with the presidents of the following labor organizations: The Progressive Black Fire fighters of Memphis, The Pioneers, and The International Association of Fire Fighters Local 1784. This was done to gain perspective from the labor side of the issues. The Director and the Deputy Director of the MFD were also interviewed to gain the perspective of administration. The interview transcripts can be found in Appendix A.

**Survey and Questionnaire**

A survey was conducted to determine the level of morale on the MFD. The survey was open to anyone who wanted to participate in all 8 bureaus of the MFD. The survey was necessary because there is not any current data that indicates the level of morale on the MFD. A copy of the survey can be found in Appendix B.

To determine how low morale affects employee productivity and personal growth on the MFD, a simple questionnaire was sent to 39 Battalion chiefs. The questionnaire was necessary too because there is not any current data to determine how low morale affects employee productivity and personal growth on the MFD. The questionnaire can be found in Appendix C.

These finding influenced the project by defining the morale level of the MFD. They determined if low morale affects productivity and personal growth. The research
also identified the factors that trigger a decrease in morale and methods to improve morale.

PROCEDURES

Literature Review

The author began gathering data on August 10, 2003. Journal articles and an Executive Fire Officer Program applied research project was obtained at the National Fire Academy’s Learning Resource Center. Literary works were used from the Memphis and Shelby County Library. The Internet was used to obtain articles from Fire Chief Magazine and a paper from a senior project from the University of Memphis. Statistical information of the personnel complement was obtained through the Fire Directors executive secretary, Jewel Neal.

Interviews

Interviews were conducted with Memphis Fire Director Chester Anderson on September 5, 2003 and Deputy Director Claude Talford on September 3, 2003. The purpose of these interviews was to get the MFD administration’s opinion on the morale level in the MFD and the morale level of the administrative staff. An additional purpose was to determine what these leaders felt the MFD could do to raise morale.

Interviews were conducted with the president of the Progressive Black Fire fighters of Memphis, Reginald A. Davis, on August 25, 2003, the president of the Pioneers, Ronald E. Mitchell, on September 1, 2003, and president of International Association of Fire fighters-Local 1784, Thomas Malone on September 3, 2003. The purpose of these interviews was to ascertain diverse views from labor organizations on the morale level in the MFD and the morale level with in their organizations. Additional
purposes included determining if low morale affects productivity and personnel growth, what causes low and high morale in the MFD, what the MFD could do to raise morale, and what their organizations do to raise morale.

**Survey and Questionnaire**

A survey was developed to determine the morale level on the MFD. An additional reason was to determine if low morale affects the productivity and personal growth of the individual taking the survey. The final reason for the survey was to obtain specific occurrences or reasons that caused employees’ morale to drop and occurrences or suggestion that caused or may cause their morale to be high or raised. The survey consisted of five multiple-choice questions and two open-ended questions.

A simple questionnaire was developed to determine how low morale affects employee productivity and personal growth on the MFD. The questionnaire consists of two open-ended questions.

**Process**

The survey was developed by the author on August 23, 2003 and presented to the MFD administration for approval on August 25, 2003. The voluntary survey was given out at a MFD staff meeting on August 28, 2003 to be distributed. All bureau heads were given the survey to be distributed downward through the chain of command. Additionally the survey was emailed to all Battalion Chiefs. The completed surveys were sent to the author through inter-departmental mail. The survey information was then entered into an Excel spread sheet to calculate the data.

The questionnaire was developed by the author on September 19, 2003 and emailed to all Battalion Chiefs on the same day. The questionnaire was also voluntary.
The questionnaires were emailed back to the author. The results were then manually tabulated.

**Population survey**

The MFD has 1,640 employees with 125 vacancies. The racial make up of the department includes 687 Blacks, 949 Whites, 3 Hispanics, and 1 Asian. There are 143 females, 62 are Firefighters, 40 work in communications, and 41 that work in various support functions. A total of 678 surveys were returned to the author by October 1, 2003.

**Population Questionnaire**

The MFD has 40 Battalion Chiefs with two vacancies. The racial make up includes 9 blacks and 31 whites. There are 3 female Battalion Chiefs. A total of 17 questionnaires were returned to the author by October 1, 2003.

**Limitations**

There were several limitations to the survey simply because of the size of the MFD. Ensuring that all personnel were given the opportunity to fill out a survey was difficult. The amount of time it took the author to receive the surveys was lengthy. Several surveys were returned partially completed. Compiling the data for the survey was time consuming, particularly the two open-ended questions. The inexperience of the author in developing surveys and conducting interviews was also a limitation.

The author’s procedures may be duplicated in other departments by using the population, administration and labor representatives of their departments. Utilization of a local library may also be necessary. Past studies of their departments, such as Richard B. Arwood’s, may have to be done in interview form with senior members of their fire department.
RESULTS

Interview results

The administration felt that morale was good which was contrary to the labor organizations’ position which indicated that they felt like morale was poor. All interviewed felt like morale did affect productivity. Four out of five of the people interviewed felt like morale affected personal growth while one believes it is a personal choice. Factors they believe trigger a decrease in morale include: racism, the promotional process, misunderstandings, inconsistent disciplinary actions across the job, dual standards, city insurance, training job wide, dwelling on the negative, low pay, uninformed personnel, poor management, and poor communications. To raise the morale on the MFD they suggested training supervisors (in leadership, sensitivity, and diversity). Additional suggestions include improving listening skills, inform personnel, provide proper training and equipment, ask for input from personnel, improve communications, implement a trustworthy system, have more understanding when dealing with on the job injuries, appoint the best person for the job, and be fair.

Questionnaire results

The following results describe how low morale affects productivity and personal growth. Decreases in productivity within the MFD because of low morale include, decreased work in “Fire Management Zones” (e.g., hanging smoke detectors, hydrant testing, and conducting survey in target hazards), absenteeism rises, and poor housekeeping. However, the productivity on the fire ground is not affected by low morale. Examples of hindered personal growth within the MFD include poor or no training, discontinuing education, and diminished study habits, therefore affecting the individual
chance for advancement. However, low morale may also increase an individual’s personal growth by motivating them to go back to school, obtain qualifications, and study for promotional exams to get them out of their current environment.

Survey results

To obtain the views of the MFD personnel on morale, a survey was developed and made available to all personnel. Table 1 indicates how the surveyed group viewed the morale level for the MFD as a whole, their morale level and their supervisor’s morale level. Charted results can be found in Appendix D.

Table 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description of morale level</th>
<th>Low</th>
<th>Moderately low</th>
<th>Average</th>
<th>Moderately high</th>
<th>High</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Memphis Fire Department</td>
<td>19 %</td>
<td>38.5 %</td>
<td>35.5 %</td>
<td>5 %</td>
<td>1.28 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal morale level</td>
<td>10 %</td>
<td>28 %</td>
<td>32 %</td>
<td>22 %</td>
<td>7.6 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supervisor’s morale level</td>
<td>6 %</td>
<td>9.5 %</td>
<td>33 %</td>
<td>24 %</td>
<td>24 %</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2 indicates the outcome of survey questions four and five. (4. Morale influences my productivity? 5. Morale impacts my personal growth?) Charted results can be found in Appendix D.

Table 2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Percentage morale affects</th>
<th>Strongly agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>No affect</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Productivity</td>
<td>27.8 %</td>
<td>39 %</td>
<td>5 %</td>
<td>3 %</td>
<td>3 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal growth</td>
<td>28.7 %</td>
<td>40 %</td>
<td>9 %</td>
<td>2 %</td>
<td>4 %</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The following are the top ten reasons given that caused a drop in morale: (a) the promotional process, (b) dual standards, (c) the recent line of duty deaths of fellow Firefighters, (d) disciplinary practices, (e) poor communications, (f) micro management, (g) poor leadership, (h) hiring practices, (i) racism, and (j) favoritism. The following are the top ten reasons given that cause a rise in morale: recognition, appreciation, Fire Fighters response to the line of duty deaths, being promoted, good supervisors, public support, comradery among Firefighters, teamwork, training, and being around positive people.

**Research Question 1.** What is the morale level in the MFD?

The morale level of the MFD was described as moderately low to low by 57.5% of the surveyed group. Individual morale levels were described as average to moderately high by 54% of the surveyed group.

**Research Question 2.** How does low morale affect productivity and personal growth?

The literature showed that low morale diminishes work quality, lowers performance, and raises absenteeism, therefore slowing down productivity. Low morale also causes a high turnover rate, lowers employee satisfaction, and decreases employee commitment thus hindering personal growth in most cases. However, some people may choose to better themselves in hopes of changing their situations or current position.

**Research Question 3.** Which specific factors trigger a decrease in employee morale?

The literature gives several factors that trigger a decrease in employee morale including (a) failing to recognize and respond to diversity issues; (b) employees not knowing what is expected from them and/or are not confident in performing their job; (c) managers that do not do anything to motivate employees; (d) employees not getting
recognition for doing a good job; (e) employee boredom; (f) supervisors that are not 
trust worthy; (g) poor communications; (h) inconsistent disciplinary actions; (i) poor 
promotional practices; (j) poor advancement opportunities; (l) dual standards; (m) 
micro management; (n) poor supervision; (o) poor training; (p) racism; and (q) sexism.

**Research Question 4.** What specific methods improve employee morale?

The literature review identified several methods that may improve employee 
morale including (a) fully use all employees (valuing diversity); (b) praise employees and 
show gratitude; (c) generate a sense of teamwork; (d) encourage employees to grow and 
showing confidence in them; (e) listen; (f) share experiences with employees; (g) give 
employees ownership and empower them; (h) implement management training programs; 
(i) train sufficiently and continuously; (j) be open and honest; (k) ensure that 
promotional procedures are acceptable, valid, and fair to all candidates; (l) organize 
committees to uncover morale problems and crush out negativity and spread positivity.

**DISCUSSION**

The literature review and the author’s findings through the survey, questionnaire 
and interviews are comparable. The main reason for a drop in morale for the MFD was 
the promotional practices among the surveyed group and mentioned by the interview 
group as well. Cascio (1995) stated “To minimize defensive behaviors, it is critical that 
the procedures used for promotion decisions (e.g., assessment centers plus performance 
appraisals) be acceptable, valid, and fair to the unsuccessful candidates” (p. 328). Dual 
standards, disciplinary practices, and poor communications were among the top five 
reasons for morale dropping in the survey. The interview groups also stated that these 
were causes for dropping morale. The attitude survey obtained by Richard B. Arwood
during his research for his senior project that was administered to the MFD in 1968 found that “...problem areas centered around communications, human relations, discipline, pay, and promotions” (Arwood, 1981, p. 3).

Recognition and appreciation were the top two reasons morale rose in the MFD. “Neglecting to give employees a well-deserved pat on the back or some other form of recognition is the greatest cause of bad morale in companies” (Ladew, 1998, p. 75). Teamwork and positive interaction raised morale within the MFD. One of Cheryl Salerno’s mitigation measures for dealing with morale issues was to “... (a) be aware of the morale level, (b) praise for work well done, (c) generate a sense of team work and (d) maintain an open door policy” (2001, p. 46). One of the steps to create a high-spirited morale-booster was to “Spread contagious enthusiasm wherever you go” (Bruce, 2003, p. 8).

Decreases in productivity within the MFD because of low morale include: decreased work in “Fire Management Zones”, absenteeism rises, and poor housekeeping. Decreases in personal growth within the MFD include poor or no training, discontinuing education, and diminished study habits. Carol A. Hacker, in *The High Cost of Low Morale and what to do about it*, discussed how low morale will be evident in an employee’s behavior, attitude, and low performance, therefore effecting productivity.

The author believes that morale in the work place needs to be constantly monitored. Low morale may be evident in some employee behavior and not affect the behavior or others. Many managers are either afraid to ask or do not take the time to ask employees about morale. Morale problems need to be addressed and dealt with fairly whether they affect behavior or not. Reacting to a problem that has come to a head
instead of addressing it in the beginning stifles progression. Therefore implications of not addressing morale problems will be evident in employees who are not satisfied, therefore hindering the forward movement of the MFD. Poor training and work slow downs in Fire Management Zones can and do cause injuries and deaths to fire fighters and civilians. Implications of addressing morale problems immediately and fairly will result in a more progressive and proactive fire department, thereby saving lives.

**RECOMMENDATIONS**

The survey instrument and interviews from the labor organizations both reveal that the morale on the MFD needs to be improved and that morale affects productivity and personal growth.

It is recommended that the MFD conduct further research to identify why the employees are unhappy with the current promotional practices and hiring procedures. From those findings, they should then implement new promotional practices and hiring practices that are fair to all current and future employees.

Additional recommendations include:

- Implementing a disciplinary matrix or form disciplinary committee.
- Hold all employees to the same standard for the position they hold.
- Form a morale committee
- Conduct leadership training for all current and future supervisors.
- Conduct diversity training for all employees annually.
- Conduct teambuilding class for all employees.
- Empower employees across the job to identify and form solutions to morale problems.
• Let employees know how they are doing good and bad whether they are subordinates or supervisors.

• Encourage employees to be positive and not to dwell on the negatives.

• Say thank you.
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Morgan, M. (2002, January) A more effective mix, *Fire Chief*


Appendix A

Interviews

Chester Anderson
Memphis Fire Department
Director
31 years of service

Interviewed: September 5, 2003

1. How would you describe the morale level in the MFD? Good
2. How would you describe the morale level in the administration? Great
3. What causes morale to be high? The openness and inclusiveness in the leadership relationship. I give the staff autonomy and empower them.
4. What causes morale to be low? Poor supervision and communications.
5. Does low morale affect productivity? Definitely
6. Does low morale affect personal growth? Yes, it affects the whole job.
7. What can the MFD do to raise morale? Train supervisors. Leadership, sensitivity and diversity classes are needed. Listen skills need to be improved as well.
8. Do you believe that morale is a personal choice? Yes

Director Anderson added that a supervisor could raise morale by simple showing interest in their personnel (all ranks). Getting to know and communicating with personnel can and will make a positive difference.
Interviews

Claude Talford
Memphis Fire Department
Deputy Director
25 years of service

Interviewed: September 3, 2003

1. How would you describe the morale level in the MFD? Pretty good over all.

2. How would you describe the morale level in the administration? Real good although we are short handed.

3. What causes morale to be high? Money, Informed personnel, awards, accepting input from personnel, and new equipment.

4. What causes morale to be low? Low pay, uninformed personnel, and poor management.

5. Does low morale affect productivity? Yes


7. What can the MFD do to raise morale? Plan for the future. Keep personnel informed. Provide proper training and equipment. Ask for input from personnel (give them some ownership). I would like to provide a wellness program in the future

8. Do you believe that morale is a personal choice? Yes, it depends on the individual.
Interviews

Thomas Malone
Memphis Fire Department
President of IAFF-Local 1784
33 years of service

Interviewed: September 3, 2003

1. How would you describe the morale level in the MFD? Poor

2. How would you describe the morale level in your organization? It reflects the morale on the job.

3. What causes morale to be high? Comradery

4. What causes morale to be low? The promotional system, City insurance, training job wide, dual standard and we tend to dwell on the negative.

5. Does low morale affect productivity? Definitely

6. Does low morale affect personal growth? Yes

7. What can the MFD do to raise morale? Improve communications, implement a trustworthy system, have more understanding when dealing with on the job injuries, and change management.

8. What does your organization do to raise morale? We stand up for the members and nonmembers. We have begun to break down the race and gender barriers.

9. Do you believe that morale is a personal choice? To a degree, a person can only take so much negativity before it starts affecting them.
Interviews

Ronald E. Mitchell  
Memphis Fire Department  
Battalion Chief and President of the Pioneers  
25 years of service  

Interviewed: September 1, 2003

1. How would you describe the morale level in the MFD? Extremely low.

2. How would you describe the morale level your organization? High and low. People are confused about where the job is headed.

3. What causes morale to be high? People like their job, they still like coming to work.

4. What causes morale to be low? Misunderstandings, disciplinary actions are not consistent across the job, and dual standards.

5. Does low morale affect productivity? Yes


7. What can the MFD do to raise morale? Improve communications

8. What does your organization do to raise morale? Present information in a positive and professional manner (we explain the reasoning behind changes). We also have social activities.

9. Do you believe that morale is a personal choice? No. I think it is part of your environment, unless you’re a very strong person.

Chief Mitchell also added that to promote personal growth in the Pioneers and his battalion that they have study sessions/discussions. A monthly test on policies and procedures is given. This stimulates personnel to study therefore positively affecting their personal growth.
Interview

Reginald A Davis
Memphis Fire Department
Lieutenant and President of the Progressive Black Fire fighters of Memphis
15 years of service

Interviewed: August 25th, 2003

1. How would you describe the morale level in the MFD? Moderately low.

2. How would you describe the morale level your organization? Moderately low.

3. What causes morale to be high? Fairness across the job.

4. What causes morale to be low? Racism and promotional process.

5. Does low morale affect productivity? Sure

6. Does low morale affect personal growth? Yes

7. What can the MFD do to raise morale? Appoint the best person for the job and be fair.

8. What does your organization do to raise morale? Keep members informed and instill pride in them.

9. Do you believe that morale is a personal choice? Yes, a person chooses his or her own mindset.
Appendix B

Morale Survey

Memphis Fire Department Personnel:

Battalion Chief Hope Lloyd is conducting a required research project for the National Fire Academy’s Executive Fire Officer Program. The purpose of the research project is to recognize what factors cause low morale and, through research, identify key areas to modify in order to improve employee morale. Morale for the purpose of this survey is the level of confidence, loyalty or optimism felt by personnel in the Memphis Fire Department.

Please take the time to complete this survey and return to Battalion Chief Hope Lloyd, Battalion 2-C-Shift. This survey is confidential, thanks in advance for your assistance.

Rank _________ Years of Service with Memphis _________.

1. How would you describe the morale level of the Memphis Fire department?
   Low  Moderately low  Average  Moderately high  High

2. How would you describe your morale level?
   Low  Moderately low  Average  Moderately high  High

3. How would you describe your supervisor’s morale level?
   Low  Moderately low  Average  Moderately high  High

4. Morale influences my productivity?
   Strongly agree  Agree  No affect  Disagree  Strongly disagree

5. Morale impacts my personal growth (training, qualifications, furthering my education)?
   Strongly agree  Agree  No affect  Disagree  Strongly disagree

6. Give an example of an occurrence that lowered your morale within the Memphis Fire Department:
   __________________________________________________________
   __________________________________________________________
7. Give an example of an occurrence that raised your morale within the Memphis Fire Department:
Appendix C

1. How does low morale affect productivity in your battalion?

2. How does low morale affect personal growth in your battalion?
Appendix D

![Graph 1: MFD morale level, individual morale level, and supervisors morale level.](image1)

- **MFD morale level**
  - Low
  - Moderately low
  - Average
  - Moderately high
  - High

![Graph 2: Productivity and Personal Growth.](image2)

- **Productivity**
  - Strongly agree
  - Agree
  - No affect
  - Disagree
  - Strongly disagree

- **Personal Growth**
  - Strongly agree
  - Agree
  - No affect
  - Disagree
  - Strongly disagree