A FORMAL ANALYSIS OF PERFORMANCE APPRAISAL SYSTEMS
AND THE ROCHESTER FIRE DEPARTMENT

EXECUTIVE DEVELOPMENT

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Abstract

The issue was that a formal analysis had never been conducted by the Rochester Fire Department (RFD) concerning the merits of periodic performance appraisals of its members. The purpose of this study was to consider the multiply aspects of performance appraisals, and to determine if a performance appraisal system should be developed for the RFD. This was a descriptive research project. The research questions were:

1. What are the potential benefits of performance appraisals?
2. What are the potential drawbacks of performance appraisals?
3. What issues need to be considered during the development phase of a performance appraisal system?
4. Should the RFD develop a performance appraisal system?

The procedures involved utilizing a feedback form to gauge the current needs and concerns of the firefighters and officers of the RFD, in relation to the adoption of a formal performance appraisal system. 95 total responses were tabulated numerically and by percentages.

The results were: 68% feel a performance appraisal system should be adopted by the RFD, 47% felt their job performance had suffered because they were not properly trained, and 50% stated that they did not clearly know what the goals and objectives of the RFD were.

The recommendation, based on this study, is for the RFD to develop a formal performance appraisal system. This study was conducted as an exploratory phase, and a great deal of time and resources must be expended before a performance appraisal system is adopted by the RFD.
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Introduction

A formal analysis has never been conducted by the Rochester Fire Department (RFD) concerning the merits of periodic performance appraisals of its members. The purpose of this research project is to evaluate multiple aspects of performance appraisal systems, and to determine if a performance appraisal program should be developed for the Rochester Fire Department. This is a descriptive research project. The research questions are:

1. What are the potential benefits of performance appraisals?
2. What are the potential drawbacks of performance appraisals?
3. What issues need to be considered during the development phase of a performance appraisal system?
4. Should the Rochester Fire Department develop a performance appraisal system?

Background and Significance

Currently the only performance appraisal system that exists for the RFD is a one year probation period for new hires, and those newly promoted. There is a simple probationary period evaluation form which is in place to determine if an employee should be retained at their current position or not. This current form has been in place for at least 15 years without any significant changes. The form is outdated, and does not pertain to members once they are off probation. Without a performance appraisal system in place, members are often left contemplating their performance without feedback from supervisors and co-workers. For members who are self-sufficient and confident, a performance appraisal system may not be needed. For the majority, feedback is
necessary to insure they are meeting department goals and objectives. Without proper feedback, some members don’t even know what the objectives of the department are.

At the present time, the only performance feedback given after probation is usually incident generated. It is done in a group setting and deals with a fire company or battalion as a whole. This feedback is completed during formal critiques, or around the coffee table. At times individual performance appraisals may be conducted, on an informal basis, by some officers, but there is no training or process to guide this practice. Without a formal process to guide supervisors and subordinates the best intentioned plans may do more harm than good. Without a formal program to guide supervisors and subordinates feedback may become confusing and damaging.

This study is important for several reasons. If employees are given performance appraisals, the lines of communication between subordinates and supervisors maybe enhanced. Members may have a better understanding of what is expected of them. Also, the department would probably recognize areas where improvements are needed.

This research project relates to the United States Fire Administration operational objective “Reduce the loss of life from fire of firefighters” (NFA, 2002, p. II-2) by communicating areas of concern relating to firefighter performance. In particular member’s actions on the fire ground when they don’t follow established guidelines, and in turn place themselves or others in harms way.

This Applied Research Project (ARP) correlates to working as a team taught in the Executive Development course. Unit 1 of the Executive Development course deals with, among other things, effective feedback. “Giving feedback is an essential skill for the executive. Effective feedback reinforces positive behaviors and helps to modify
negative ones” (NFA, 1998, p.1-29). This unit also describes some aspects of effective
feedback. With the creation of effective feedback, members of an organization can begin
to listen to each other, and understand the needs and expectations of each member. This
project may help clarify the responsibility each member has towards the organization and
the community we serve.

Literature Review

The purpose of this literature review is to set forth the practical foundation of this
study. During the literature review process, various fire service trade magazines, books
and business publications were reviewed. These publications were found at the National
Fire Academy (NFA) Learning Resource Center (LCR), the Rochester, New York Public
Library and the Internet. These publications allowed for a through review of
performance evaluations.

Before any discussion can begin concerning performance appraisals, a definition
must be established as to what constitutes a performance appraisal system. A
performance appraisal system usually consists of a system whereby an employee’s work
performance is rated or judged by someone other than the employee. The rating covers a
specific time period and is systematically applied to all employees. The process is either
mandatory or induced by an extrinsic incentive. Performance appraisals are not usually
voluntary. The rating is preserved by the department rather than the employee (Coens,
Jenkins, 2000, p.13). It is widely understood that if any of these is present, than a
performance appraisal system exist.

Three basic questions need to be addressed in order to facilitate the need for the
adoption of a performance appraisal system by the RFD. First, are there potential
benefits of performance appraisals? Second, what are the potential drawbacks of instituting a performance appraisal system? Third, what constitutes an effective performance appraisal system? The results of this examination will lead to recommendations concerning adopting a performance appraisal system in the RFD.

During the literature review, it became quite evident that most authors felt a performance evaluation system of some sort was beneficial. Performance appraisals “Provide a baseline for improving the performance of each firefighter and, consequently, of the department” (Alexon, 2002, p.37). All the controversy surrounding performance evaluations centered on what type of system should be utilized, how the system was presented, and how the results of the appraisals are utilized within the organization. “Many appraisal processes are incomplete and fail to fulfill their potential because the ultimate aims are not clear or because users are not adept at day-to-day people management” (Thompson, 1999, p.10). Since most fire departments don’t utilize performance appraisals, the first problem that must be overcome is tradition within the fire service. Most “Department members stick to tradition and resist change, which is problematic because department members have an important influence over operational change” (Donahue, 2000, p. 104). Because fire departments are steeped in tradition any changes or new ideas often encounter significant resistance. This resistance must be anticipated and dealt with in a delicate manner.

When considering the benefits of performance appraisals, most agree “Your personnel are your most valuable resource. Do you get the best performance from them that you could? Do your firefighters know how you feel about them? A performance appraisal program can help with both areas” (Alexon, 2002, p. 37). By adopting a
performance appraisal program, employees are given feedback in relation to their performance. Without feedback, employees are left to their own opinions regarding their performance. There are two potential concerns when employees are not provided with timely feedback. They may feel they are performing at department standards, when in fact they are not. Or, they may feel their performance is substandard, when in fact their performance is exceptional. Most employees want to do a respectable job and if their performance is unknown to them it may add unneeded stress. The job of firefighting is stressful and organizations should not add performance anxiety tension on top of normal work stress.

One of the biggest potential benefits of performance appraisals, lies in the belief, that the lines of communication are further opened between the supervisor and their subordinates. “Effective communication during the performance review process can only enhance the supervisor-subordinate relationship” (Bogard, 2000, p. 39). Even if both parties don’t agree on the outcome of the performance review, an opportunity exists for dialog. As Viola (1999) aptly phrased it, “Sometimes I have conducted reviews where the parties have agreed to disagree. This is okay as long as the points are stressed and meaningful conversation has taken place” (p.6).

Another prospective benefit of performance appraisals is that training issues can be explored. One aspect is “If employees do not receive training in one category of your evaluation, this should become apparent when you review the evaluation. The evaluation is a verification of your agency’s standardization of training” (Apco, 2001, p. 47).
Furthermore, “If all your employees require remedial training in a category and perform
satisfactorily upon completion of that training, the initial training your employees go through may be inferior” (Apco, 2001, p. 48).

As previously stated performance appraisals allow an organization to meet customer demands. Without appraisals, department members may not be sure of the objectives of the department. “Because all local government employees ultimately serve at the request of citizens, performance evaluation is seen as an essential component of striving for efficient and effective service delivery and accountability” (Moulder, 2001, p. 1). It is inherently important that the fire department knows what customers expect and want, and that the organization informs the employees of these expectations. Performance appraisals may help in sharing these objectives with employees.

However, there are some long standing concerns with regards to adopting performance appraisals. The fact is “No one is free from bias and prejudice. What we do with these factors and how they manifest themselves are valid concerns” (APCO, 2001, p. 49). The fact is that no matter how objective appraisals are constructed there is always the possibility of subjective reviews. As “the Chinese philosopher Sin Yu remarked about 1,700 years ago, ‘The Imperial Rater of Nine Grades seldom rates men according to their merits, but always according to his likes and dislikes” (Solie, 2002, p. 8).

Another concern is that there is no study in the literature review which quantitatively demonstrates that a performance appraisal system has benefited an organization. There are many administrators who feel it is beneficial, but this is subjective analysis on their part. On the contrary, surveys done by the Human Resources Management, uncovered that nearly 90% of appraisal programs do not work for a myriad of reasons (Coens, Jenkins, 2000, p. 18).
It is very hard, if not impossible, to determine what really motivates an employee, with regards to a performance appraisal program. If, for example, a bonus or promotion is tied into a performance appraisal system it is difficult to determine if it was the bonus or the performance appraisal program that made the employee more proficient. If it was the bonus that solely motivated the employee to be more proficient, a formal performance appraisal system is not necessary. The question then becomes how effective will the performance appraisal system be to the employee who did not meet a standard. Will they be inclined to accept feedback and improve if they know there is no incentive to improve? In other words, was it the performance appraisal system, or the potential incentive, that helps to improve the employees’ performance?

With ever increasing litigation in the work place, it becomes imperative that any appraisal system must be carefully developed and monitored. “Because evidence, such as appraisals-or lack of them-are often used in employment litigation, it has become increasingly necessary to carefully document and defeat poor performance, current trends point to even greater care being needed in recording and disclosing information” (Thompson, 1999, p. 13). Although potential employment litigation may be a reason to adopt an appraisal system, it also supports the need for a great deal of training to be carried out. If the program is faulty in any way, the program’s structure is most often unfairly scrutinized by the courts as opposed to an employee’s poor performance. The mere fact that a program was not designed or administered correctly may override the employee’s poor performance in a court of law.

If an appraisal system is not well developed, more harm than good can occur. “Too often, appraisal destroys human spirit and, in the span of a 30 minute meeting,
transform a vibrant, highly committed employee into a demoralized, indifferent wallflower who reads the want ads on the weekend” (Coens, Jenkins, 2000, p.18). If supervisors are not capable of grasping how a performance review should be conducted then the whole program can not and should not be developed. It is apparent that “many appraisal processes are incomplete and fail to fulfill their potential because the ultimate aims are not clear or because users are not adept at day-to-day people management. They sometimes see appraisal as a substitute for good management skills” (Thompson, 1999, p.10).

There are many opinions regarding factors that need to be considered during the development phase of a performance appraisal program. Some of the most important considerations are objectivity, who is involved in the creation of, training for, and application of the program.

One of the biggest hurdles that must be overcome is the ability to take the subjectivity out of the process. When developing an appraisal system, it is important to remember that “objective rating categories are determined by the features and characteristics of the topic itself. For example, if the evaluation has a category for reporting to work on time, either the employee is early, on time or late. It is pretty straightforward. Usually objective categories are without bias” (APCO, 2001, p. 49). It appears that no matter how well a system is designed, if there is room for the evaluator to be subjective the whole process becomes futile.

When designing an appraisal system there must be a complete “buy in” of the program from the top down. Everyone who will be affected by the process must be included in the development phase. An organization should “involve all supervisors and
employees in the process. Remember, participation leads to ownership and ownership leads to acceptance” (Solie, 2002, p. 9). An important factor is that “the people performing job functions are often in a good position to suggest quantifiable outcomes. Relating performance standards to job descriptions is a concrete action that employers can take to minimize concerns that appraisals are unfair” (Moulder, 2001, p. 3). If employees and supervisors are allowed to design the system together then the whole process has more validity. Consider that “collaboration in developing standards gives the employee an opportunity to participate in deciding what is reasonable and fair. When employees are evaluated on standards that they help develop, chances are they will respect the outcome of the evaluation” (Moulder, 2001, p. 3).

An integral part of developing a performance appraisal system is training. Training must be completed to ensure fairness and understanding. “Training is an essential component of quality assurance, it will help reduce some of the inconsistencies that may occur in ratings, and will provide a philosophical framework for supervisors to use in conducting performance appraisals” (Moulder, 2001, p. 5). If supervisors are not given the proper training to conduct performance appraisal, then the supervisors are left to their own opinions with regards to the content of the program. As Alexon (2002, p. 38) stated, “company officers or other supervisors that will do the appraisals must be trained for that task. Lack of training can lead to misapplication of the program, resulting in legal problems and distrust of the program.”

It is imperative that feedback is given throughout the year. Without continual feedback, the employee does not have an opportunity to correct unacceptable behavior. If a supervisor only discusses poor performance during the yearly review, the employee
has every right to become upset with the process. “You must give immediate feedback, because that’s when it’s most effective” (Finley, 2000, p. 70). With continual feedback the subordinate and supervisor are able to communicate on a regular basis thus opening the lines of communication. As Bogard (2000) wrote “the exchange of information – not the rating form – is the critical factor in a performance evaluation. The goal is to enhance employee performance” (p. 38).

In summary, based on this review, it appears that performance appraisals have helped some organizations overcome communication problems, behavior concerns and training deficiencies. It becomes exceedingly evident that the development of an appraisal program needs to include everyone, that there needs to be extensive training with regards to the program, and feedback needs to be continually given. The problems revealed with several performance appraisal systems in existence are; that it is extremely difficult to develop a program which is completely objective, there is no quantitative proof that performance appraisal systems work, and performance appraisal systems administered incorrectly most likely will affect moral and impair the organization.

Procedures

Feedback Form

Two feedback forms (Appendices A & B) were developed to try and determine what the overall viewpoint is within the RFD concerning performance appraisals. The purpose of this research was to determine if an appraisal system is needed, if members are willing to help in the development, and to determine what apprehension existed concerning performance appraisals among other things.
Two feedback forms were developed, one for subordinates (Appendix A), and one for supervisors (Appendix B). There were two reasons for the two forms. The first reason was to determine the different views of both supervisors and subordinates concerning performance appraisals. The second reason was to determine if there was a disparity between the two groups of respondents concerning the amount of feedback being given. Potentially supervisors may feel they are providing feedback on a consistent basis while their subordinates may feel otherwise.

*Population*

A convenience sample was used for this research project. The RFD is made up of 535 members. Line company members and staff personnel made up the sample for this project. Each fire house has four groups working a rotating shift schedule. The line company members were chosen by placing firehouse companies and specific groups for each firehouse in a hat, and randomly drawing those companies and groups who would be given the feedback form. Some firehouses had two or three groups participating in the study, while some firehouses had no groups participating. Whenever a firehouse was chosen, three to five firefighters (depending on Engine or Quint/Midi) and the officer of that firehouse were asked to fill out the feedback form. To select staff personnel, each staff unit was placed in a hat and one unit was chosen.

The study population was 15% of the firefighters and 17% of the officers. “For descriptive research, a sample of 10 percent of the population is considered minimum” (Gay, 1987, p.114).

*Limitations and Assumptions*
This research is a first time review of the need for a performance appraisal system in the RFD. Only a sample of the department was surveyed. Results may not generalize to the entire department.

It is assumed that all members answered honestly and openly. Although it was stressed that this was an individual research project, this author felt some members who participated in the survey were unsure of the intent. It is highly likely that some members felt their responses would be used by the administration for other purposes.

Even though each participant of the survey was allowed to ask questions concerning the survey, none did. Therefore, it is assumed each participant knew what a performance appraisal system was and answered each question accordingly. Given that there are many types of performance appraisal programs in existence, a member’s answers may hinge on the individual's experience with these types of programs in the past. If a member had an unpleasant experience with these types of programs at another job their answers would definitely be skewed.

Definition of Terms

Line Company Members – Those members of the RFD who work on the suppression side of the fire department. These members ride the fire trucks and respond to emergency calls directly out of the firehouses.

Staff Personnel – Those members of the RFD who work in support functions for the department. These members work straight days. Some of the units that comprise staff are Fire Safety, Community Relations and Education, and Planning and Research.
Engine – An engine company is a piece of fire apparatus which holds three firefighters and one officer. They respond to emergency calls out of the firehouses in the city.

Qunit/Midi – Two pieces of fire apparatus which respond out of the same fire house. The Quint holds three firefighters and one officer and the Midi holds two firefighters. They respond to emergency calls out of the firehouses in the city.

Firefighter – Those members of the department who have not been promoted to a supervisory rank. This is the first “rank” when an individual is hired on the job.

Officer – Those members of the department who have been promoted to either a Lieutenant or Captain rank within the department. The Lieutenant rank is a front line supervisor position, and the Captain rank is a command position within the RFD.

Results

A total of 20 officers and 75 firefighters completed the feedback form. Each member who completed the feedback form answered every question. The first two questions on the feedback form were asked to try and gauge what amount of feedback is currently being giving. Presently most members (80%) feel that they are receiving performance feedback from their supervisors on a regular basis, 75% of the officers felt that they are providing feedback to their subordinates on a regular basis (figure 1). Most members, officers and firefighters 75% and 70% respectively, stated that they would like or do like the opportunity to sit down and discuss job performance on a regular basis.
A potential benefit of performance appraisals is that each member can be clear about the goals and objectives of the organization. Both the officers and firefighters were split directly down the middle in their responses. 50% of each group stated they either knew or did not know clearly what the goals and objectives of the RFD were (figure 2).
Another benefit of adopting a performance appraisal system is that training issues may become evident during a formal appraisal program. This topic drew a significant discrepancy between officers and firefighters. Both groups were asked if they had felt their job performance had ever suffered because they were not properly trained. 15 (75%), officers felt that their performance had suffered because they were not properly trained. 30 (40%), firefighters felt their performance had suffered due to lack of proper training (figure 3).

One of the biggest drawbacks regarding the adoption of a performance appraisal system is whether it can be done objectively or not by the person doing the rating. Most officers (80%) felt they could objectively review their subordinates without personal bias. The firefighters were asked if they felt their officers could objectively review their
performance. Sixty (80%), firefighters felt their current supervisor could review their performance objectively without personal bias. The last question asked on the feedback form was an open ended question, “What would be your greatest concern if a performance appraisal system were adopted by the RFD?” The responses to this question were somewhat varied. The majority of the apprehension 85% centered around two issues. The first issue was concerns regarding fairness of the program. Although most members felt the raters could be objective, there was concern about the system as a whole being fair, their concerns were: Who would design the system, would each officer rate equally, and could it really be done without prejudice. Over 59% of the total respondents felt that impartiality of the system as a whole would be a major obstacle to overcome. The second issue related to the performance appraisal being used against the employee. 25% of the respondents were concerned the system would be used against the employee during a promotional interview, or be used in a disciplinary manner.

One of the most important aspects of developing a performance appraisal system is that everyone is on board and willing to participate in the development. One of the questions asked on the feedback form was, would the member be willing to help develop a performance appraisal system for the RFD? Only 8 officers (40%) would be willing to help in the development of a performance appraisal system for the RFD. When the firefighters were asked the same question 37 (50%) stated they would be willing to help in the development of a performance appraisal system.

Both firefighters and officers felt that, in the interest of job safety a performance appraisal system should be adopted by the RFD. Overall 64 of the 95 total respondents
felt a performance appraisal system should be adopted by the RFD (figure 4). 67% of officers and firefighters were in favor of a performance appraisal program.

Figure 4

Respondents Who Feel a Performance Appraisal System Should Be Adopted

Discussion

One of the biggest surprises regarding the results was that the majority of the respondents felt they were either receiving (80% firefighters) or giving (75% officers) performance feedback on a regular basis. Although this performance feedback is not done with specific department guidelines in a formal setting, it is nonetheless being done.

If a formal performance appraisal system was in place there may be a greater benefit to officers and firefighters, but that could not be determined until a formal system is adopted. On the contrary, a formal appraisal system may add unnecessary anxiety to a process that is already being utilized by most companies, and this added pressure could foster unwanted side effects. Because most respondents already receive or give feedback,
in their opinion, any new “formal” system would need to be carefully monitored for its positive or negative effects and adjusted accordingly.

Customarily “Department members stick to tradition and resist change, which is problematic because department members have an important influence over operational change” (Donahue, 2000, p. 104). The fire service is known for its traditional beliefs and followings. This was not the case with the results from the RFD feedback form. 75% of the officers and 67% of the firefighters surveyed stated that they would like the opportunity to discuss performance feedback on formal basis. Since the RFD does not have a formal appraisal system in place this would be a new program which would not stick to traditional followings of the RFD.

The results indicate that the adoption of a performance appraisal system may have a better chance of success in the RFD because members are agreeable to try a program that does not currently exist. Furthermore, these results indicate that members want a more formal line of communication with either their supervisors or subordinates. “Effective communication during the performance review process can only enhance the supervisor- subordinate relationship” (Bogard, 2000, p. 39).

Even though members were not given specifics of what a performance appraisal system entails or what the potential ramifications could be, they still welcomed the opportunity. This tells the author that something is missing during current performance feedback. The missing link maybe ineffective communication between supervisor and subordinate or perhaps genuine open dialog between the two parties. Again these assumptions could not be verified until the department adopts a system for a period of time and conducts an evaluation of that system.
Another potential benefit of a performance appraisal system is that members are aware of whether or not they are meeting department goals and objectives. According to results 50% of all respondents did not know what the goals and objectives for the RFD were. “Because all local government employees ultimately serve at the request of citizens, performance evaluation is seen as an essential component of striving for efficient and effective service delivery and accountability” (Moulder, 2001, p. 1). All fire department goals and objectives ultimately strive for better service for the citizens they serve. Because a performance appraisal system may help in this delivery, and 50% of the members of the RFD are not currently aware of these objectives, it stands to reason that a formal appraisal system would help our department meet customer demands. A performance appraisal system may assist the RFD administration in disseminating needed information to the line companies regarding the administrations goals and objectives.

While one of the biggest concerns regarding performance appraisal systems is the fairness of the system, the survey results refuted this. It seems “No one is free from bias and prejudice. What we do with these factors and how they manifest themselves are valid concerns” (APCO, 2001, p.49). The feedback forms filled out by members of the RFD seemed to have conflicting results. Both the officers and subordinates held the opinion that a review of job performance could be done without personal bias. Overwhelming, 80% of those surveyed thought that a performance review could be accomplished objectively.

However, the last open ended question on the survey asked what the biggest concern would be if a performance appraisal system was adopted by the RFD. Over 59% of the respondents felt the system as a whole could not be governed objectively. These
contradictory results could indicate that they feel their current supervisor could rate them objectively, but they would have concerns with administration of the program.

One of the other major concerns regarding the rating process of performance is the fact that firefighting is unlike any other occupation. In the fire department members sleep, eat and basically live together as much as they do with their nuclear family. This type of atmosphere lends itself to conflicts on a daily basis which may or may not be performance related. About 1700 years ago the Chinese philosopher Sin Yu stated that “The Imperial Rater of Nine Grades seldom rates men according to their merits, but always according to his likes and dislikes” (Solie, 2002, p.8).

This would almost certainly be more prevalent in the field of firefighting then in any other occupation due to living arraignments. In fact, the ability to get along with other members in the firehouse is so important to the overall job that this would probably be one of the rating categories in a performance appraisal system. This is where personal biases could easily come into play during the rating procedure. For example, a big moral booster for any fire company is eating meals together. If a member does not wish to eat with the fire company there is a potential of affecting the moral of the unit. In a case like this, if a person is affecting the moral of the unit should that person be rated unsatisfactorily for a decision which is a personal choice?

Other apprehensions were expressed by respondents were that a performance appraisal system would be used against the employee either during the promotional process or in disciplinary proceedings. These are legitimate concerns regarding the adoption of a program. If the results of a performance appraisal system were inappropriately used in a negative manner toward the employee, moral of the department
could easily be affected. “Too often, appraisal destroys human spirit and, in the span of a 30 minute meeting, transform a vibrant, highly committed employee into a demoralized, indifferent wallflower who reads the want ads on the weekend” (Coens, Jenkins, 2000, p.18). There would obviously be the possibility of prejudiced performance ratings permanently hurting a firefighter’s career if they were used in a destructive manner.

The most important aspect in developing an effective performance appraisal system is complete “buy in” from the top down. A vital part is that “the people performing job functions are often in a good position to suggest quantifiable outcomes. Relating performance standards to job descriptions is a concrete action that employers can take to minimize concerns that appraisals are unfair” (Moulder, 2001, p. 3). When members of the RFD were asked whether or not they would be willing to help develop a program, 45% of all respondents indicated yes. This response indicates interest by the members in developing a program. Member participation would enhance the likelihood of a program being successful. The organization must “involve all supervisors and employees in the process. Remember, participation leads to ownership and ownership leads to acceptance” (Solie, 2002, p.9). During the initial development phase the administration must acknowledge that “collaboration in developing standards gives the employee an opportunity to participate in deciding what is reasonable and fair. When employees are evaluated on standards that they help develop, chances are they will respect the outcome of the evaluation” (Moulder, 2001, p.3). If the administration imposes its own standards and beliefs during the development phase then the whole system is a complete waste of time, and will most likely hurt the organization in the long run.
The last question to consider is whether or not the RFD should develop a performance appraisal system. 68% of the respondents indicated that the RFD should develop a program. Again this is vital to the success of the program. If most members feel the department should adopt a system then this indicates a system maybe needed. Furthermore, the program would stand a greater chance for success because a majority of the members want it. It is astonishing that the respondents answered yes to this question without a clear outline of what an appraisal system entails or how it would be used. The results would indicate that an appraisal system should be adopted by the RFD.

Recommendations

Based on the results of this study the RFD should consider developing a performance appraisal system. Although 80% of the respondents felt they are currently receiving some feedback from their supervisors, 70% of the same respondents felt they would like an opportunity to discuss their performance with their supervisor. This indicates a majority of members want an opportunity to sit down and discuss their performance with their superior on a regular basis.

Because half of the members indicated they did not clearly know what the goals and objectives of the RFD were, the adoption of a performance appraisal system could help define these. Another benefit which may result from adopting a performance appraisal system is improved training for the officers of the department. Given that 75% of the officers felt their performance had suffered because they were not properly trained, a performance appraisal system could help reveal what areas need to be addressed in future officer training.
If the RFD considers adopting a performance appraisal system it must be done with great care and diligence. It is very important to include every segment of the department during the development phase. The program must be objective, and each member needs to be properly trained on the function and purpose of the program. If at any point members felt they were unfairly being evaluated the damage could be irreparable. Members must also feel confident that the results would be used fairly and strengthen their performance. In addition members must receive feedback on a continual basis. This type of program does not work if members are feed results once a year.

This study sets the ground work for developing a performance appraisal system for the RFD. More extensive research is needed to determine what type of system should be incorporated, how it would be developed, and how the evaluation would be used.

It must be clearly understood that a performance appraisal system may do more harm than good if significant time and effort is not expended on the program. Any organization contemplating adopting a performance appraisal system needs to recognize the many pitfalls and benefits that may result. Each organization is very dynamic and as such must take into consideration what objectives they hope to accomplish.
Reference List


Public Safety Communications, 68(3), 8-17.


Appendix (A)

Firefighter

This feedback form is part of my Executive Fire Officer Applied Research Project. Responding to any or all questions is voluntary. Please answer all questions honestly and do not identify yourself. Neither the administration nor the Union of the RFD has any involvement in the development of this feedback form. Thank you for your assistance, Darryl E. Winter. Please circle your answers accordingly:

Do you feel you receive performance feedback from your Immediate supervisor on a regular basis? YES NO

Would you like the opportunity to sit down with your immediate Supervisor to discuss your strengths and weaknesses in relation your to your job performance? YES NO

Do you feel you clearly know what the goals and objectives of the RFD are? YES NO

Do you feel your job performance has ever suffered because you were not properly trained? YES NO

Do you feel your supervisor could objectively review your job performance without personal bias? YES NO

Do you feel (in the interest of job safety) a performance appraisal system should be adopted by the RFD? YES NO

Would you be willing to help develop a performance appraisal System for the RFD? YES NO

What would be your greatest concern if a performance appraisal system were adopted by the RFD?

________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
Appendix (B)

Supervisor

This feedback form is part of my Executive Fire Officer Applied Research Project. Responding to any or all questions is voluntary. Please answer all questions honestly and do not identify yourself. Neither the administration nor the Union of the RFD has any involvement in the development of this feedback form. Thank you for your assistance, Darryl E. Winter. Please circle your answers accordingly:

Do you as a supervisor feel you give each one of your subordinates feedback on their job performance on a continuous basis? YES NO

Would you like the opportunity to sit down (on a formal basis) with your subordinates to discuss their job performance? YES NO

Do you feel you clearly know what the goals and objectives of the RFD are? YES NO

Do you feel you could objectively review the job performance of your subordinates without personal bias? YES NO

Do you feel your job performance has ever suffered because you were not properly trained? YES NO

Do you feel (in the interest of job safety) a performance appraisal system should be adopted by the RFD? YES NO

Would you be willing to help develop a performance appraisal System for the RFD? YES NO

What would be your greatest concern if a performance appraisal system were adopted by the RFD?_______________________________________________________________
_______________________________________________________________________