“PASSING THE TORCH”

SUCCESION PLANNING IN A PROFESSIONAL

FIRE SERVICE ORGANIZATION

Executive Leadership

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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.

Singed: _________________________________
ABSTRACT

This research project investigated the problem of not having a succession plan in place for a professional fire service organization, the role it played in developing fire service professionals in preparing them for promotional opportunities to the top spot of fire chief, and it also explored the concept of how succession planning raises the level of professionalism within the fire service. The purpose of this research project was to specifically study the City of Peoria, Arizona fire department and the surrounding Phoenix regional communities and explore how they valued succession planning within their professional fire departments.

A descriptive/action research method was employed to explain the findings of the Peoria Fire Department and the Phoenix Arizona regional area fire agencies to make recommendations to the Peoria Fire Chief to help in the development of a succession plan. It also served to make recommendations to the Phoenix Life Safety Council on the issue of succession planning regionally, and to provide aspiring successors with updated information so that they would be better prepared for required promotional qualifications.

An extensive review of literature received from the National Fire Academy’s Learning Resource Center was conducted. In addition, an interview conducted with Phoenix Fire Chief Alan Brunacini was done to gain perspective and insight to his position and to discuss the challenges that face fire chiefs of today.

The four following research questions were developed and evaluated for this project:
1. Would a professional fire service organization benefit from having a succession plan?
2. Does having a formal succession plan raise the level of professionalism in the fire service?
3. Would the Peoria fire department benefit by having a succession plan?
4. Would an aspiring fire chief candidate benefit from their department having a succession plan?

Procedures included contacting twenty professional fire chiefs that make up the Phoenix Regional Life Safety Council. A survey questionnaire was designed, sent, and completed by fire chiefs of professional fire service organizations that participated in the survey.

The results of the research were compiled and indicated that succession planning was valued by the Peoria fire chief as well as the Phoenix regional Life Safety Council and would raise the level of professionalism in the fire service by raising its standards for preparing fire chiefs successors for the next level. It also indicated that aspiring fire chief candidates would benefit from having a professional succession plan in place to use as a road map.

The recommended actions include that the Peoria fire department develop a succession plan and then put it to practice, also suggested were that the Phoenix Regional Life Safety Council take an approach to succession planning that would include opportunities for Chief officers to experience the skills necessary to be a successful fire chief.
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INTRODUCTION

Problem Statement

The history of promotional advancement to the top position of Fire Chief in the fire service has been entrenched in the use of seniority with time in position as an Assistant or Deputy Fire chief when awarding the promotions. The selection process that consists of; “who is up next” has been over used by many professional fire service organizations often done by city officials who may or may not know what is best for the fire department. When this is done, the organization does not do itself justice by investigating the candidate thoroughly enough by looking into their formal educational accomplishments, relative work experience, organizational and social skills, nor does it look at what the fire service organization itself really needs in a leader to be successful in the fire chief position.

Yes, we’ve done a good job of creating our profession over the last 50 years. For many good reasons, we have put almost all of our eggs in one basket of training the entry–level firefighters. We have developed more information that we have delivered to our driver operators. Then we placed a lot of emphasis on our company officers. But guess what’s missing? You’re right. Its’ the capstone at the top, the job of the fire chief (Coleman, January, 2002, p.36).

Several large city fire departments today still strictly use seniority as the only promotional criteria. The person with the most years on the job automatically is placed into the position of Fire Chief. For the fire chief to lead a department in a positive, productive direction, time on
the job does not necessarily provide the individual with the skills to take on the top leadership position of fire chief, rarely is it a positive step for the overall organization to take the steps toward improving as a fire service organization.

Opportunities for leadership development provided by the National Fire Academy, the International Fire Chiefs Association and other professional organizations have developed curriculum and skill paths designated to help develop fire executives and chief officers. Many professional fire agencies have not utilized these programs nor do they recognize the need or value of such programs. The failure of not supporting them or integrating them in to a fire department’s career development or succession plan is concerning to an fire service organization and its future.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this descriptive/action research project was to seek the possible value and/or importance of an succession plan for the Peoria Fire Department and determine if there were any advantages of having one in place. The goal of this research project was to weigh the benefits and/or problems of putting a succession plan into practice. Additionally, the study examined the importance of a succession plan and how it could possibly influence the professional future of the fire service regionally.

Research Method

A descriptive/action research method was chosen for this study to explain where the Peoria Fire Department is as a fire service organization and where it would like to be in the future. This method was also used to provide insight and make recommendations to the fire chief to work towards putting a comprehensive succession plan into place for the fire department.
The research project tied nicely into the executive leadership course taken as part of the executive fire officer program and dealt with the issue of taking the next leadership step of fire chief. It also linked the leadership skills taught like viewing the overall global aspects of providing direction, guidance, and leadership to not only the Peoria fire department but the entire Phoenix region in providing succession planning information.

**Research Questions**

The following questions were developed for this research paper:

RQ-1. Would a professional fire service organization benefit from having a succession plan?

RQ-2. Does having a formal succession plan raise the level of professionalism in the fire service?

RQ-3. Would the Peoria fire department benefit by having a succession plan?

RQ-4. Would an aspiring fire chief candidate benefit from their department having a succession plan?

**BACKGROUND AND SIGNIFICANCE**

In the fire service, how many times has one heard the following sayings, “I’ll let the next Fire Chief worry about that”, or “I will be retired by then, so it will not be one of my priorities”. “If I prepare someone to fill my position, they will then replace me”. It May be that simple. Fire Chief’s may not want to give anyone any ideas, or they may feel that it is important that they have all the answers, that way they would have all the control & power, and therefore, survive longer at their position and not get voted off the island because they are so sorely needed.

According to several leading analyst of top companies in the private sector, one way to measure a truly successful organization is to see how they address the need for succession
planning within the organization. Stock portfolios and their stability are based on just such a premise and their value is determined on by what the future looks like for both the company and it’s’ leadership. Many family run businesses have known the true benefit of having a succession plan to keep the business running and flourishing by preparing and choosing the right person, therefore ensuring that the company succeeds. Failure to do so could mean the end of the company and even more importantly the family. Why then do many fire organizations who claim they are like a family and that the fire department should be run more like a business continue to only look at meeting the emergency needs of today? Why do very few fire departments in the nation not have a succession plan in place? Why don’t they support recognized programs like the National Fire Academy? Why it is in many cases left up to organizational politics on who will run the fire department when the Chief is gone? Why do individuals in the fire service usually have to go out on their own to seek any professional career development to prepare them to become a fire chief? Why do city managers continue to look outside their fire departments for the succession to the fire chief? These questions and many more should be looked into further to determined the way a fire service organizations could raise their professional standards when looking for their next fire chief.

Today, the Peoria Fire Department has been under going a major change. The department has just recently acquired a new professional fire chief. A Chief who feels it is important to raise the level of professionalism of not only the Peoria department but also in the Phoenix region. He feels the fire service in general needs to step up and be run more efficiently like a business. The Peoria Fire department is an organization that just 25 years ago was a volunteer fire department, now it is a fast growing professional fire department with over 120 paid personnel. The population of the city has risen from 12,500 in the early 1980’s to over 130,000 currently. The
area of coverage for public safety has grown from 35 square miles to now over 175 in the same time period. This explosive growth has been a challenge for both the fire department and the city to keep up with the ever growing public safety needs for its citizens.

The former fire chief was the first to be hired to head the paid fire department and he did so while he was learning how to do the job. He did not have the benefit of having someone mentor him or show him the way to do something within his job description. Everything our department went through for twenty years was an ongoing daily experiment and the outcome then became the goal setting process causing many hurtful precedents. On the day he announcd his retirement, there were no plans in place for his succession. Two Deputy Chiefs held positions of overseeing the Operations and Support Services divisions. One came from the inside the department and was not ready, the second, came from outside the department, but was ready. This posed quite a bit of confusion for those involved. What was going to be the direction of the organization and who would be its new leader? City management had many questions, so they spent several thousands of dollars to hire an outside consultant and completed a nation wide search to find the next fire chief for the position. After several months of this process a selection was made. The newest Deputy Chief that had gone out on his own and prepared himself while working for another fire department was selected. Since taking over, he has reinforced the need for the fire department to be run more like a business and therefore developed a business plan and organized the department around the plan. The department has now rallied around this fire chief and his plan to take the department and raise it to another level professionally. Each step has been methodically taken to raise the bar and set the standard not only within the Phoenix Arizona regional area but also the state and the fire service itself.
The Peoria Fire Department has been working on succession planning by preparing firefighters and engineers to be ready for the next engineer and captain’s position openings. This process starts right after fire recruits graduate from the fire academy. They are given an orientation class to the Peoria fire department and handed a manual on how to succeed as a probationary firefighter. Once they complete their firefighter’s probation, they are then given a class and handed a new manual to instruct them on how to work out of class as an acting engineer. After completing a move up program and when they have a couple of year’s experience as a firefighter, they are then eligible to then promote to the rank of Engineer. This process continues up through the rank of Captain which they are then expected to have continued their formal education by completing a minimum of an Associate degree in Fire Science. Like many fire service organizations the Peoria fire department has been successful in preparing our members for the promotional process up through the supervisory position of Fire Captain. Under the direction of the new fire chief, a new Battalion Chief Academy was established for aspiring candidates. This course is the first of its kind in the region to actively prepare personnel for a management position within a fire department. Unfortunately, preparation for ranks above the Battalion Chiefs level such as Deputy Chief, and Fire Chief does not currently exists. Often the candidates that aspire to promote to the executive level positions have to seek out development on their own by outside means. If a succession plan were in place, the necessary competencies for the positions would be laid out along with any essential qualifications and requirements. To ensure proficiency in the core areas necessary to be successful in the position of fire chief, this could be a tremendous benefit for the candidate, the fire department and the city.

Antonellis (1997) shares with us his feelings on internal recruitment by saying; hiring form within an organization to fill a vacancy has several advantages. Internal promotion helps
motivate people who aspire to develop their skills and careers. If a fire department never hired from within, many of its members would be demoralized by the prospects of a stagnant career and no opportunity for new or increased responsibilities. In fact, this process could force potential candidates to seek employment in other departments (p.2.).

If individuals within a fire service organization fail to prepare for opportunities for advancement and at the same time, fire departments fail to prepare for succession the stability of the organization and its future are in question. Therefore, it makes sense to incorporate mentoring into your department and begin preparing several individuals for your ultimate replacement from the day you start as fire chief.

**Summary**

If the fire service developed a “standard” for the optimal candidate for the executive level of the fire chief position, then they would not have so many departments doing their own thing when it comes to selecting a fire chief when a vacancy opens. Individuals and fire departments must realize that they will not be in the position very long comparatively when looking at the big picture. When becoming a fire chief, one of your duties is to look after the organization. Would it not be fair to say that if you were to prepare the department for the next five to ten years even after you have actually left the organization, that you have exceeded your goal? If succession planning is not important to the fire chief it will not be to anyone else in the organization. It must come from the top and be modeled as the way to do business, only then will it start on down the road to be institutionalized within the fire department. Subordinates must be mentored in the areas that deal directly with executive decisions and have had the opportunity to experience handling large programs dealing within both the administrative and policy sides of the organization so they can prove they are capable of operating at the fire chiefs’ level.
This descriptive/action research project could help the Peoria fire department get an accurate read of where it stands in terms of readiness and preparation necessary for its members to be able to seek the fire chief’s position. It should also show if the region values succession planning as a whole. This project will allow the Peoria department to formulate a plan for the future that will look at all the factors of this study and make the appropriate recommendations to the fire chief to put a plan into place and measure its effectiveness throughout the organization.

**LITERATURE REVIEW**

**Historical**

Fire chiefs are strategists, both on the fire ground and at the station. They must think strategically about the future of their departments (Meyer, 1990, p.87). The future of fire departments does lie in the hands of the fire chief in the form of succession planning. Whether or not a fire department or its top leader plans for the future, the future will still come. Preparing for the succession of leadership in the fire service must move up on the priority list for fire chiefs. Taking care of just today may help in the needs of your department for the here and now but what about the future? Who will carry on the programs and policies you have worked hard to put into place?

A current tendency among fire service theorists is to draw comparisons between the management of the fire departments and the management of small, private enterprises. The comparison has merit and may help the fire chief to put his job in the proper perspective. (Meyer, 1990, p.87). Succession planning and career development has played an important role in the success of an organization in business both public and private.
Succession issues are a huge concern both to family-owned businesses and public companies. One of the first responsibilities of the newly elected public company CEOs is to select and train their successors (Le van, 1999, p.87).

In the fire service there are still fire departments that continue to use seniority to select the fire chief of their organization. The individual with the most time on in the department automatically is selected to become the next chief of the department. Many others have a process that selects the next in line as far as rank is concerned. Whoever happens to be the Assistant chief in the department now becomes the fire chief when the position is vacated. Coleman (1988) reinforces this by stating, In early times the eldest son was heir to his father’s resources, regardless of competency or capability. Today, competition has replaced the chronology of birth dates. Tomorrow’s fire chief or the successor to any incumbent in the fire service is likely to be picked by a different criteria (p.23).

Today fire departments are finding the need to require a higher level of expectations from their fire chiefs. Like a small business owner, the fire chief must wear many hats and have broad vision if the business-the fire business-is function effectively and realize its potential (Meyer, 1990, p. 87). This being the case, is it fair to the successor of the fire chief’s position to assume the role if he or she is not properly prepared? Is it fair to the organization to have a leader that is merely keep things status quo? Maintaining this status quo position assumes the seniority system will take care of preparation for promotion (Coleman, 1988, p.24).

Many City Managers are looking for a person who has a good performance record, and who will be able to duplicate and improve upon what they have accomplished in other municipalities. The future of the Fire Chief’s job is changing from the “Chief of Fires” to a service system manager. While some Chiefs still have suppression responsibilities, the overwhelming demand
is for an administrative manager. The preferred educational requirements indicate the trend is for a well-educated manager capable of running a department comparable to a private business (Gardiner, 2002, p.11).

Rosenbluth & Peters (1998) declares, there are a number of components to successful continuity planning and they fall into three categories:

1. Companies must commit to developing and deploying a standardized process by which to plan for their future. They need to know who will lead them into the coming decades.

2. People need direct access to information that will enable them to manage their own careers. This information must include a breakdown of all roles in the company, along with the qualifications or competencies required for excellence in those positions. Self-assessment tools needed for each area of improvement, interviewing tips and resume writing tips.

3. Companies need to develop a culture that supports academic education, professional deployment, leadership and human skills training. A company must also develop a culture of trust (p.80).

An organization must know where it is, where it wants to go, and what route it should take to get there (Greengard, 2001, p.36). The successful fire administrators in today’s fire departments across this country have motivated their mid-level managers where they too can have vision, and thus transfer that vision down through the rank and file of their organization, making the organization stronger (Gardiner, 2002, p.11). An officer who is in the role of planning for his own successor should look at a performance evaluation system as one of the available tools to accomplish that planning (Coleman, 1988, p.24). Greengard (2001) also believes this, when he
quotes Nancy Monson a senior consultant for Hagberg Consulting Group for his article; Best-practice organizations use succession planning to prepare for potential problems and disasters, she notes, but they also rely on such plans to develop and maintain the strong leadership that’s required under normal conditions. A succession plan can help an organization keep pace with the changes in the business, industry, and overall marketplace. It can help the enterprise focus on organizational excellence (p.36).

The next element of succession planning is the opportunity to achieve. The more open and universal an organization is regarding opportunities, the more likely skill development will occur on the part of many individuals instead of one (Coleman, 1988, p.25).

According to Phoenix Fire Chief Alan Brunacini in an interview with the author, Brunacini states that,

> Succession planning for a fire department should be considered more of an approach in preparing members to rise to the next level of the organization, with an introduction to both the administrative an policy levels of the organization rather than a strict written document one must adhere to”. We want our personnel to work both independently and interdependently within the organization. We need to integrate steps inline with the organization where we can take care of the support system to prepare our members for the trip, not necessarily knowing where we are going, but knowing that we are prepared and ready for what happens to comes up. Brunacini, also stated, that the fire services has done a much better job of preparing our chiefs (cognitively) both tactically and strategically on the fire ground because of the strong connection made and that maybe we should take more time studying what teachable moments we can pass on to our chiefs in the areas that would prepare them to be successful fire chiefs in the areas that are more emotional and social. Chief Brunacini goes on to say, that there are four types of development, biological, emotional, cognitive and social. Depending on where an individual is in their own development in each of these areas coincides with their effectiveness in the position they hold within the organization, therefore, interesting enough determines where they will end up in the organization (Brunacini/Rooney, March 2004).

An extensive review of literature received from the National Fire Academy’s Learning Resource Center was conducted. This review proved to be fruitful as it provided the author with several professional journal articles dealing with the issues of succession planning in the fire
service. A search of the local library was also conducted to find references on how private businesses deal with succession planning in order to compare similarities and differences. The findings in the literature have been broken down to three areas as they relate to succession planning in the fire service. They are succession planning, professional fire chief competencies and development standards for future candidates aspiring to become a fire chief. Each of these areas were addressed in effort to determine the advantages of having a succession plan for a professional fire service organization as well as increasing the level of professionalism within the regional fire service in general, and more specifically, how the Peoria fire department would benefit from having such a plan in place.

**Succession Planning**

The need for succession planning in business has been obvious for a long time, however in the fire service it has not been a priority among the leaders in the fire service. The importance of succession planning must first be shown from the top position of fire chief of the fire department. Incumbent officers of today have to ask themselves about their responsibilities to their successors. For example, is it important to pick an individual to replace us or to create an environment that prepares someone to replace us (Coleman, 1988.p 23). Rosenbluth & Peters (1998) feel, Continuity planning is essential to the future of every organization, but it’s one of those areas that can easily slip off the plate at a busy company. As individuals, working on a plan to replace ourselves is not normally among our highest priorities. Ironically, though, it is only when we have someone to fill our shoes that we can advance (p. 79). Fox (2002) concurs; Great companies and great bosses are constantly training, teaching, improving, and growing their employees. You must groom people for new challenges. You must groom people to do more, to do a better job, to support you, to succeed you (p.13). Coleman (1988) states, I favor an attitude
toward succession planning that centers around the organization environment. Opportunity and preparation are the key. The opportunity should be there for anyone to achieve the higher level of responsibility in the fire service (p.23). Lea (1991) differs when referencing a family business by declaring, the probability of continuity is higher when family members coming into the business get prior training and experience for ownership responsibilities and management jobs (p.184).

Former Mesa, Arizona Fire Chief Dennis Compton (2002) states in his book “When in Doubt,” Lead part 2, The Management of a person’s career is a difficult challenge and responsibility for the organization and the individual. We hire people at relatively young ages, benefit from their minds, hearts, and bodies for the majority of their adult work lives, then send them off to retirement. Trying to be all things to all people almost always produces negative organizational results. However having a better understanding of the personal and professional needs of our work force throughout their careers and into their retirement, and then providing a guide for them to follow as they take their journey makes sense and is a good human resource management (p.25).

Greengard (2001) in his article quoted, William C. Byham, CEO of the consulting firm Development Dimensions International, takes a stronger approach by discussing, “Without a well-designed succession management system, an organization can find itself thrown into chaos and confusion,” (p.34). Mihm (2003) is quoted as saying; Leading organizations go beyond a succession planning approach that focuses on simply replacing individuals and engage in broad, integrated succession planning and management efforts that focus on strengthening both current and future organizational capacity. As a part of this broad approach, these organizations
identify, develop, and select successors who are the right people, with the right skills, at the right
time for leadership and other key position (p.1.).

The next element of succession planning is instilling an environment that creates challenge.
Starting from the top down, an organization should have an element of challenge facing it at all
times—whether that challenge is the creation of a new program, surviving an economic crisis or
combating major fires. If challenge is not provided to an organization as a whole, it can be
provided to organizational increments in spite of the departmental apathy (Coleman, 1988, p.24).
Greengard (2001) suggests, an effective succession plan requires a careful examination of
business strategy (p.36). Greengard (2001) research suggests the following keys to successful
succession planning:

**Five Keys to Successful Succession Planning:**

1. **Identify key leadership criteria:** It’s essential that an organization know what skills and
   competencies it needs to succeed.

2. **Find future leaders and motivate them:** An enterprise must have a system in place for
   finding star employees and ensuring that they’re ready for key positions.

3. **Create a sense of responsibility within the organization:** Most successful organizations
   rely on corporate management to review and oversee the progress of employees. Then as
   a worker moves up the ladder, there’s a detailed record of his or her progress—with review
   from various levels within the company.

4. **Align succession planning with the corporate culture:** Despite an emphasis on past
   performance, it is essential to retain a focus on core values. Effective succession
   planning requires an organization to stress these values, whether it’s a desire to perform
leadership tasks or complete assigned tasks, and weight them heavily in the overall selection process.

5. **Measure results and reinforce desired behavior**: The only way to know whether a succession plan is effective is to put systems in place to track results. Then the organization must develop systems, such as reward-based compensation, training, and appropriate assignments, to motivate workers and push them along desired development paths (p.36).

The last element of succession planning is exposure. As we move up through rank hierarchy, it is important for incumbents to take the opportunity to receive exposure. This can be as simple as allowing a key chief officer make a council presentation. It can be as complicated as allowing members of the staff to serve on a policy committees on the upper levels of the organization in lieu of the fire chief (Coleman, 1988, p.26). LeVan (1999) concluded, Ultimately, there’s no way you can ensure the success of your successor. Lay the ground work, set the timetable, and the get out of the way (p.91). Lea (1991) adds, Managing the hand-over process, the period of transition between senior and incoming generations, requires a firm hand, a clear eye, and a flexible approach (p.184).

Mihm (2003) feels in the government sector that the following six practices should be demonstrated:

1. **Receive active support of the top leadership.**

2. **Link to strategic planning.**

3. **Identify talent from multiple organizational levels, early in careers, or with critical skills.**

4. **Emphasize development assignments in addition to formal training.**
5. **Address specific human capital challenges, such as diversity, leadership capacity, and retention.**

6. **Facilitate broader transformation efforts** (p.3-7).

**Professional Fire Chief Competencies**

In order to ensure that the person that is slated to take over as fire chief is ready, several core competencies should be met. Fleming (2002) states, that Chief Officers are responsible for performing the four basic management functions:

1) **Planning** is the primary management function and involves determining missions, goals, objectives and strategies.

2) **Organizing** is the allocation of resources to fulfill organizational plans.

3) **Directing** is the implementation of planned initiatives and strategies, and is enhanced through effective leadership.

4) **Controlling** is the monitoring of actual results, the comparison of these results to plans and the use of corrective action, as appropriate (p.36).

In a related article, Ronny Coleman (2002) agrees but also adds, “Today’s Fire Chief is expected to also coordinate terrorism response, emergency medical services, engage in master planning, prepare and manage annual budgets, deal with labor relations, and draft legislation. He or she must be a manager and administrator, as well as a politician.” (p.17). Meyer (1990) also stated, A chief without good business and financial management skills places the department at a significant disadvantage. The fire chief must know how to market the department to the public and be competitive within the system that’s distributing public funds (p.88). Gardiner (1994) feels that, A chief’s true success might depend on how he or she measure against these 11 benchmark standards:
1) Knowledge, training and experience
2) Political understanding
3) Diplomacy
4) Judgment
5) Loyalty
6) Courage
7) Integrity
8) Technical proficiency
9) Responsibility
10) Compassion
11) Unselfishness (p.56-59).

Marinucci (1998) wrote; The American Heritage Dictionary defines “professional” as one who has an assured competence in a particular field or occupation. If the fire service is truly committed to improvement and professionalism, we must develop a method to “assure competence.” One way is to elevate a profession’s stature and ability is through education in conjunction with a program for certifying competency (p.68). The International Association of Fire Chief’s Professional Designation Program is divided into seven job-related components: Experience, Education, Professional development, Professional contributions, Active association membership, Demonstration of technical competencies to standard and Community Involvement (p.68). This new program puts a premium on professionalism. The goals of the program include:

- Increase the level of professionalism among fire chiefs and chief fire officers.
- Establishing a set of minimum core competencies for the senior ranks.
• Establishing a career development path for those interested in senior fire officer positions.
• Ensuring the professional development of department chiefs and chief officers.
• Enhancing career mobility.
• Defining the roles, responsibilities and accountability of senior fire executives.
• Establishing a manageable and user friendly designation delivery system.
(p.68).

Gardiner (2002) concurs; The Fire Chief must have the knowledge and the ability to put his or her plans into action. He or she should be able to develop ideas or provide a vehicle and proceed to build the roadway to travel, or implement a system to use to get from “here to there.” By possessing this ability he or she understands where the fire department has been, where it is today and where it is going (p.12).

Clark (2004) feels that, the National Fire Academy Executive Fire Officers Program and the Chief Fire Officer Designation program contributed professional credentialing methods to our progress. These excellent efforts have taken decades to implement (p.56).

Chuck Burkell 2004, believes, that the National fire Academy’s Executive Fire Officer Program is the most elite fire leadership program in the United States. The program has evolved since its inception in 1985 to become the preeminent professional development program for senior fire executives. The EFOP curriculum focuses on leadership development; risk reduction; integrated incident preparedness; response and mitigation; and applied research to facilitate change at the community level (p.58).

According to the IAFC’s Officer Development Handbook’s Final Draft (2003) was developed to measure competencies for an officer to prepare themselves for an Executive Fire Officer’s
Designation. It states, Mapping is defined as “Professional development is the planned, progressive life-long process of education, training, self-development and experience.” (p.4). Gardiner (2002) believes, when selecting a fire chief, the burden placed on local government to make the correct choice for a fire chief can be a heavy and difficult public policy decision at best. When looking at what is needed to make the fire department a full community service agency, you may find yourself feeling that no one person can have it all, not even yourself (p.11).

**Fire Chief Candidate Preparedness**

Michael J. Toth (1998) notes, On almost any given day, a firefighter somewhere in the country is taking the oath of office to become a fire officer. It does not matter how big the fire department is or whether it’s a career or volunteer-it’s a big step (p.40). Buhs (1998) feels, As firefighters go up for promotions, they’re learning that seniority isn’t what it used to be. In today’s world, getting ahead means planning your career path and earning the education to make it a reality. Today’s tenured personnel generally haven’t prepared themselves educationally, and some still believe that experience and time on the job are the keys to promotion. This type of thinking will either eliminate them from consideration or put them out of reach for the promotion (p.56). Fire departments across the nation face many challenges. One of the most important is the development of personnel to assume positions of leadership within the department. To that end, the leadership gap that exists in many fire departments must be addressed (Fleming, 2002, p.36). Coleman (1998) believes the responsibility to prepare them for those positions are shared between the organization and the individual. The individual must provide the motivation and the intrinsic skill. The organization must provide the direction and the standards for that achievement (p.23). Greengard (2001) writes A succession plan can help an organization
identify its needs—as well as those individual managers and executives—and ensure that it is hiring and training to fit an overall master plan. A plan can also help employees gain experience in diverse areas so that they’re ready for an assignment when an opening occurs (p.38). Coleman (1992) tells us, There are three techniques a chief can use to minimize the risk of being replaced by someone who is not well prepared. 1) Challenge your subordinates, 2) involve them in key decision-making processes, and 3) practice the “one push” rule. The line of distinction here is that pushing someone off doesn’t mean that you should hang on (p.30).

Kouzes and Posner (2002) findings were, Make certain that peoples’ jobs are designed so that they know what is expected from them. Provide sufficient training and technical support so people can complete their assignments successfully. Enrich their responsibilities so that they experience variety in their task assignments and opportunities to make meaningful decisions about how their work gets accomplished. Create occasions for them to network with others in the organization. Involve them in programs, meetings, and decisions that have direct impact on their job performance. Take a careful look at what your constituents are doing in their jobs and determine where you could be enriching their positions and consequently fostering greater self-confidence (p.304).

Compton (2000) discusses, A recently developed concept is called “pre-briefing for success.” It is grounded in the belief that members will tend to perform better when they are prepared from a skills and knowledge standpoint, but also prepared psychologically, emotionally, and spiritually for the more stressful events the will encounter. Pre-briefing for success provides a roadmap to minimizing the effects of psychological and emotional stress on members (p.34).
Summary

If an individual is inspired and motivated enough to prepare for promotion and the fire service organization shares in the responsibility of the individual’s career development, a true partnership is formed. The individual feels valued, like they are a part of something much larger and wants to take on a role of responsibility, the organization is not only preparing the individual for promotion today, but is securing its’ overall future by developing a successor. Succession planning should be important from the top of the organization all the way down and through the organization. True succession planning gives opportunities to several employees to improve themselves from within the organization.

PROCEDURES

First the research focused on the value the Phoenix regional area placed on succession planning, and how it related to promotional opportunities to the top position of fire chief in a professional fire service organization. In effort to address the research questions specifically designed for this study a survey questionnaire was designed and distributed to all fire chiefs within the Phoenix regional area that belong to Life Safety Council. The fire chiefs of the fire departments from Apache Junction, Avondale, Buckeye, Buckeye Valley, Chandler, Daisy Mountain, El Mirage, Gila River, Gilbert, Glendale, Goodyear, Luke Air Force Base, Mesa, Peoria, Sun City, Sun City West, Sun Lakes, Surprise, Tempe, and Tolleson were contacted for their opinions to a twenty-question survey that asked them to rate how they felt about ten statements on the subject of succession planning. Their choices to answer the statements were, strongly agree, agree, disagree, and strongly disagree. Next they were asked to choose either a
yes or no answer on ten questions that were designed to gain their perspective on how they felt on succession planning for their department and region in preparing their successor.

The information received from the survey questionnaire was also used to support recommendations in a memorandum to the Peoria Fire Chief for requirements needed to place a succession plan into practice for the Peoria, Arizona fire department.

A twenty-statement survey questionnaire was designed. The survey questionnaires were distributed to the twenty fire chiefs via e-mail. The questions were devised to help measure the validity of the research questions that were developed for this descriptive/action research project. Each survey question was directly related to one of the four research questions. The questions were also designed to force each person who completed the survey to select an answer and commit one way or another regarding their opinions about this emotional and sometimes controversial subject. By developing a forced choice survey consisting of: strongly agree, agree, disagree and strongly disagree it was felt that this would accomplish that goal. A neutral selection was not included on purpose to force the participant completing the survey to make a stand one way or the other (Appendix B).

A cover letter (Appendix A) accompanied the survey questions, which stated the intent of the survey and what the information was to be used for. It explained the material would be held in strict confidence and that their name or any other identifying numbers were not needed or required to complete the survey.

On the page that contained the survey statement questions the participants were instructed to place the appropriate answers as it related to them for each statement made. Participants were then asked to place a corresponding number for the first ten statement questions in the space provided for the answer next to the end of each statement question. The numbers consisted of a
1 for a strongly agree answer, 2 for an agree answer, 3 for a disagree answer and a 4 for a strongly disagree answer. This was done intentionally in reverse order because of the phenomena known in surveys that imply a higher value in relation to that of the higher corresponding number. The intention was for the person taking the survey to answer the question honestly and accurately without consideration of any question’s weighted value, therefore attempting to eliminate any biased responses. The numbers of one to four did not provide any value to the survey. The numbers were there to be use strictly as a code for the data input into the Microsoft Excel spreadsheet. On the second page, participants were asked to either circle a yes or no in response to the survey questions asked. The yes and no answers where the given a numerical value and placed into the Microsoft Excel spreadsheet for tallying the results.

It was anticipated that twenty survey questionnaires would be distributed to all the Fire Chiefs that participate in the Phoenix regional Life Safety Consortium. Permission to conduct the survey was received from the Fire Chief two weeks prior to the distribution of the survey questionnaires.

It was estimated that the questionnaire took approximately ten to fifteen minutes to complete. After all the questionnaires were completed they were returned to the author via e-mail or by fax. Thirteen questionnaires of the twenty sent out were completed and returned after five working days. The sample population in this research paper consisted of the twenty fire chiefs that currently make up the Life Safety Council in the Phoenix regional area.

Explanations were given that the results would be used for course requirements for the National Fire Academy’s Executive Leadership course research project. They were informed that all data gathered for the project would be held in strict confidence and the results of the
project would not be sold, or used for any commercial profit. They were thanked for their cooperation and notified that by completing the questionnaire they were giving their consent for their information to be used in this research project.

The twenty individuals chosen by the methods mentioned above were contacted through their respective e-mail addresses with a cover letter, which explained the intent of the research, and a questionnaire that were to be filled out and returned to the author via e-mail or fax machine. The statement questionnaire’s distribution took one day to compile and distribute to the fire chiefs throughout the Phoenix regional area. Within five working days, thirteen of the twenty questionnaires were completed and returned. All surveys returned were filled out correctly and completely. It is not known what happened to the seven surveys that were not returned.

Thirteen returned surveys out of twenty questionnaires sent out to the sample population represent a high return rate of 62%. It demonstrated that a large portion of the participants took the survey seriously and that they were interested in the outcome of the research.

The data was entered into a Microsoft Excel spreadsheet that was created specifically for this research. This spreadsheet then sorted through all the information and calculated everything into percentages for each question asked in the survey. The information was then divided into individual pie charts and bar graphs representing each question asked both in the statement questionnaire (Appendix B) and the Fire Chief’s Perspective questionnaire (Appendix C). The spreadsheets were then divided into categories that represented all the possible answers to develop into pie charts. After calculating every question into a percentage the data was then combined both answers that represented agreeing side of the chart to receive a total agree percentage. The same calculation was performed for the two questions representing the disagreeing answers on the chart to receive a total disagreement percentage. All percentages
were check and rechecked for accuracy and then compared. The survey results, in percentages, were then cross-referenced with the correlating research questions that they represented to measure the results.

**Limitations of the Study**

The research population only included fire chiefs of the fire departments represented and their opinions and did not include all members of the Phoenix regional fire service organizations. Therefore, the study did not represent the entire fire service members and their feelings on succession planning within the Phoenix region. Populations that would have included members of other professional fire service organizations within the rest of the nation would have given the study a wider look at the information on how succession planning is valued in the nation and how it is related to increasing professionalism in the fire service.

A pre-study was not conducted. Many of the limitations could have been reduced or eliminated if a pre-study had been conducted on this topic. Additionally, the research project was completed in accordance with APA 4th addition due to the author starting the process four years ago under this addition and not with the newer 5th addition.

**Definition of Terms**

To adequately study the research questions noted above, certain items must be defined. Terms will be defined as follows:

**Fire Department**- responsible for protecting life and property from fires, medical emergencies and disasters.

**Fire Chief**- the director in charge of all aspects of the fire department.

**Assistant Chief**- the second in command of the fire department behind the fire chief in charge of either Deputy Chiefs and their divisions.
**Deputy Fire Chief**-the manager in charge of all aspects of a division within the fire department.

**Battalion Chief**-the middle manager in charge of one of the three shifts of fire companies in the operations division. Also known as shift commander.

**Fire Captain**-the front line supervisor that is in charge of a fire company in the fire operations division. Also known as company officer.

**Fire Engineer**-the apparatus operator that drives the fire truck to the scenes and operates the fire suppression equipment to provide water to the firefighters.

**Firefighter**-the entry-level position in the operations division.

**Fire Recruit**-trainee while in the fire training academy.

**Fire Science**-the college coursework designed for a career in the fire service.

**Emergency medical service**-the paramedic services the fire department provides.

**Hazmat**-stands for hazardous material emergency response.

**Fire ground**- the scene where fire suppression activities are taking place.

**Fire ground Commander**-person who is in charge of fire suppression activities.

**Succession Plan**-a ongoing program or process which participants are trained and prepared to step in and take over a position when it is vacated.

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**RESULTS**

The following are the results of both the statement questions and the fire chief’s perspective questions:

Research Question one was measured by the survey that consisted of statement questions number one, five and nine. Also measured, were the fire chiefs perspective questionnaire numbers one, two and eight. The results of survey statement question one, stated, that ninety-
two percent of the participants agreed that it is the fire department’s responsibility to provide professional development. Compared to only eight percent of the participants that disagreed with the statement question. The results of statement question number five, stated, that seventy-seven percent of the participants agreed that a succession plan would help an organization make the transition easier. Compared to twenty-three percent that disagreed. On statement question number nine, sixty-nine percent of the participants agreed with that a succession plan should help in the support of the next fire chief. Compared to thirty-one percent that disagreed with the question. The fire chief’s perspective question one, eight out of the thirteen participant’s answer that they were hired from within their department. Perspective question number two, nine out of thirteen participants said they felt the next fire chief would come from their respective fire department. Perspective question number eight, seven out of thirteen participants thought that their deputies and assistants were preparing for the fire chief’s position.

**STATEMENT QUESTION # 1**

It is a fire department's responsibility to provide professional development opportunities to its internal members for promotion to the top position of fire chief.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>AGREE</th>
<th>DISAGREE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>92%</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
STATEMENT QUESTION # 5

A succession plan would help the organization make the transition easier.

77% AGREE
23% DISAGREE

STATEMENT QUESTION # 9

A succession plan should help in the support of the next fire chief.

69% AGREE
31% DISAGREE
FIRE CHIEF PERSPECTIVE

**Question #1**

Were you hired as the fire chief from within your department?

- **YES** 8
- **NO** 5

**Question #2**

Do you feel the next fire chief will come from within your department?

- **YES** 9
- **NO** 4

FIRE CHIEF PREFERENCE

**Question #8**

Are the assistant or deputy chiefs in your department preparing to compete for the fire chief's position?

- **YES** 7
- **NO** 6
Research question number two was addressed by survey statement questions number two and four. The results of survey statement question number two, stated, that seventy-seven percent of the participants agreed with the statement that a well run fire service organization has a succession plan in place, compared to twenty-three percent who disagreed with the statement question. Survey statement question number four’s results indicated that sixty-nine percent of the participants agreed with the statement that having a succession plan would raise the level of professionalism within their department, compared to thirty-one percent of the participants disagreeing with the statement question. Fire Chief Perspective Survey question number four showed that eleven out of thirteen of the participants surveyed denied having a succession plan in place. Fire Chief Perspective question number six, indicated ten out of thirteen of the participants felt that a succession plan would help in providing direction for the department after their departure. Perspective question number nine, eleven out of thirteen participants agree that they feel the Executive Fire Officer Program and Chief Officer Designation programs help prepare candidates for the fire chief’s position.

**STATEMENT QUESTION # 2**

A well run fire service organization has a plan for fire chief succession in place.

![Pie chart showing 77% agree and 23% disagree.](image)
STATEMENT QUESTION # 4

Having a succession plan in place would raise the level of professionalism within your department.

31% DISAGREE
69% AGREE

FIRE CHIEF PERSPECTIVE

Does your department have a succession plan?

NO 11
YES 2

NUMBER OF FIRE CHIEFS
Research question number three was addressed by the survey statement questions number six and seven. The results of survey question number six showed that sixty-nine percent of the participants agreed with the statement question that fire departments should be run more like a business, compared to thirty-one percent disagreeing with the statement question. Survey statement question number seven results stated that seventy-seven percent of the participants
surveyed agreed to the statement that fire departments are like a family business, compared to twenty-three percent that disagreed with the question. Fire Chief Perspective Survey question number five results state that nine out of thirteen participants stated that their fire department has a business plan.

**STATEMENT QUESTION # 6**

Fire departments should be run more like a business.

- **AGREE**: 69%
- **DISAGREE**: 31%

**STATEMENT QUESTION # 7**

Fire departments are like a family business.

- **AGREE**: 77%
- **DISAGREE**: 23%
Research question number four was measured by survey statement questions number three, eight and ten. The responses to survey question number three showed that seventy-seven percent of the participants disagreed that the fire service does a good job of preparing its members to take over the roll of fire chief, compared to only twenty-three percent agreeing with the question. Survey statement question number eight results showed that ninety-two percent of the participants disagreed that it is an individual’s sole responsibility to prepare them for the fire chief’s position compared to only eight percent of the participant agreeing to the statement question. Statement question number ten results show that ninety-two percent of the participants agree that a succession plan could be used as a road map for those who are preparing for the fire chief’s position, compared to eight percent disagreeing with the statement. Fire Chief Perspective question number three results state that ten out of thirteen participants agree to have someone in their department qualified to take over as fire chief. Perspective question seven results say that eleven out of thirteen participants feel that the transition would go smoother if a succession plan were in place. Perspective question number ten results state that eight out of thirteen participants feel they would be able to make a recommendation for the person who will
end up being their successor.

**STATEMENT QUESTION # 3**

The fire service as a whole does a good job of preparing its members to take over the role of fire chief.

- **AGREE**: 23%
- **DISAGREE**: 77%

**STATEMENT QUESTION # 8**

It is solely up to an individual to prepare himself/herself for the position of fire chief.

- **AGREE**: 8%
- **DISAGREE**: 92%
STATEMENT QUESTION # 10
A succession plan could be used as a road map for those who are preparing for the fire chief's position.

92%

AGREE

8%

DISAGREE

FIRE CHIEF PERSPECTIVE

Is there anyone in your department qualified and prepared to take over as fire chief?

PQ3

YES

3

NO

10

NUMBER OF FIRE CHIEFS
Summary

The results of the survey questions showed that the majority of participants in the Phoenix area region fire service organizations agreed with all the statement questions asked in the survey questionnaire. In all ten of the statement questions asked in the survey, the participants felt strongly one way or the other about the statement questions. In the statement questions answered, none were close to being equal in the participant’s feelings of statement questions considered.

The results of the fire chief’s perspective, six out of the ten questions participants felt strongly one way of the other on the question asked. The remaining four were very close and could be
considered even from the participants answers and a wash could be considered on the questions asked.

These results showed that by not using a neutral position for an answer in the statement questions forced the participant to chose one way or the other when selecting their answer. Forcing the participants to choose either a yes or no answer on the fire chief’s perspective questionnaire, did show the participants diversity in their answers with them being split on four of the questions asked.

**DISCUSSION**

The data gathered through this study demonstrated that the Phoenix regional fire area as fire service organizations, overwhelmingly value succession planning and recognizes the importance and benefits that can be obtained from a having a succession plan in place. The fire chiefs in the Phoenix regional area also feel very strongly about a department’s responsibility in providing development opportunities to its members in promoting to the fire chief’s level. In one of the largest spread the participants disagreed that it is the sole responsibility of the individual to prepare himself/herself for promotion to the chief’s position. One very interesting position is that a majority of the participants felt strongly that the fire service in general does a poor job of preparing its members for promotion to take over the role of fire chief.

In addition, when speaking on the enhancement of professionalism within the fire service, it was concluded that by having a succession plan combined with career development to provide the access to information and knowledge needed for the individual to be a strong candidate for promotion and eventually an effective fire chief in a professional fire department. Thus, increasing the level of standards of professionalism in the fire service.
A further look into this study revealed that an overwhelming majority felt that a succession plan would help the fire organization going through a transition of replacing the fire chief. It could be concluded that a strong portion of the respondents also felt that a fire service organization should be run more like a business and have a business plan in place as well as a family business with the importance emphasized on having a succession plan in place.

It was also concluded that having a succession plan would do the following for a professional fire service organization, help in supporting the next fire chief, make the transition easier for the organization and possibly the most importantly, provide a road map for the with the aspiration to become a fire chief the tools necessary to be successful in preparing them to take on the top role of fire chief. In the area of hiring from within the organization it has been concluded that the respondents would strongly encouraged that this practiced be continued. Next, the respondents again overwhelmingly felt that in their organizations, that there was someone in place who was qualified to take over as fire chief. The data also indicated that it was nearly a wash on whether or not their Assistant or Deputy Chiefs were preparing to become a fire chief nor did the majority of the fire departments represented had a succession plan in place.

Finally, it was concluded (via the literature review) that the need for a succession plan in a professional fire service organization, is imperative for the survival and growth of the fire service as a profession. More interactions are needed with all ranks of the fire service in the area of educating and preparing quality opportunities that will develop firefighters of today into productive fire service chiefs of tomorrow. Fire Chiefs have to be able to continually assess the needs of the community and the goals of the fire department to make sure that they are aligned. A succession plan for more professional fire service organizations and their members could help bring those goals to fruition.
The need to establish a plan that is both fair and consistent in the area of succession planning for the department’s promotional process is now incumbent on the Peoria Fire Chief and his management team. The department must immediately start developing our employees to take over the leadership roles for the future of our fire department.

The study also showed that the Peoria Fire Department values succession planning from its fire chief. Placing a comprehensive succession plan that is both consistent and fair will raise the Peoria fire department standards, thus raising its level of professionalism.

This research project will be utilized as a basis to construct a comprehensive report on succession planning for promotion to the position of fire chief and provide the needed recommendations for developing such a plan to meet the requirements and to develop a policy for the department.

Creating a plan for the whole organization that maps out the strategies for a succession plan should give the department a common direction as well as provide a solid base to improve on for the future. Finally, having the ability to implement a plan that effects the entire rank and file of the department and by including them in the process should only enhance the service level we provide to the citizens of Peoria and ensure them of continuity of leadership within the department, thusly, raising the comfort level of the City Manager and Mayor.

**Implications for Future Research**

Future research could investigate several areas in which this study did not examine in detail. This study did not investigate other fire departments that have gone through similar rapid growth problems. Fire chiefs and members of fire departments that have experienced a similar level of growth could have provided valuable information to any future study on succession planning. A survey of aspiring fire chiefs from fire departments may have showed the relevance to the
development of skills required in the performance of the fire chief’s job and opportunities both educationally and in the relative experience levels that are desired.

Further, it would have helped the study if an evaluation of other fire departments’ nationally and how they address these same issues (and what are the benchmarks for the industry) would have provided more valuable information in the study for comparison and relevancy.

**RECOMMENDATIONS**

The Peoria fire department should take the necessary steps to improve in the area of succession planning. Peoria can set up and put a plan into practice that its members can be proud of and that the whole organization can be proud of. If the Peoria fire department does not look to the future and the current system is left in place to provide succession, members would continue to prepare themselves for promotion and guess at the approach. This would cause confusion among the ranks and may ultimately cause our department to have service delivery problems for the customers we provide service to. It may also cause strain labor relations due to lack of confidence in our strategic planning.

The Peoria fire department can become a leader in the region by taking the necessary steps to create a comprehensive plan that would raise the level of professionalism within the department.

The following recommendations are suggested to the Peoria Fire Chief to help prepare a succession plan for its fire department and to approach the Regional Life Safety Council with the issue to help provide leadership throughout the region to increase professionalism:

1. That the Peoria fire department devises a clear and concise succession plan to include career development opportunities, required formal education, and job related experience outlined for those aspiring to promote to the fire chief position.
2. That the Peoria fire chief set the direction and standards of the succession plan and that it is supported by the chief officers.

3. That the plan be tied into the fire departments overall fire master plan to meet and compliment the goals previously set forth.

4. That the succession plan incorporates the Peoria fire department’s core values of Team, Trust, Efficiency and Professionalism.

5. That the fire chief provide opportunities for his executive officers for exposure to higher level programs, projects, policy making, and local politics.

6. That the succession plan be coordinated to our overall strategic plan and be interlinked with our department’s policies and standard operating procedures.

7. That we take succession planning to our labor/management executive steering committee at our annual retreat and make it our number one priority over the next year to ensure by- in, and ultimately be an institutionalized practice.

8. That the Peoria fire chief implement incremental increases of opportunities in preparing the department’s Battalion and Deputy and Fire Chiefs so they can develop skills necessary to stay current on today’s fire service administrative and city policies and tomorrow’s technological advances.

9. That the Peoria fire department encourages its members to seek formal education in a related field to help prepare them for promotion and to achieve required degrees.

10. The Peoria Fire department develops a comprehensive training program for its members that will address the challenging and diverse issues confronting fire chiefs today.
11. That the Peoria fire department encourage its members to seek career developing opportunities like the National Fire Academy’s Executive Fire Officer Program and to seek Chief Officer’s Designation from the International Fire Chiefs Association.

12. That both the Phoenix regional fire service administrations and the Firefighter’s local labor union, work together to come up with an acceptable succession plan that will benefit the fire service regionally and ensure that aspiring fire chiefs are prepared to fill promotional vacancies to fire chief when they open.

13. That the Phoenix regional Life Safety Consortium develop a board of directors to include representation from each agency to provide guidance to fire departments in working towards changing the fire service to be run more efficiently like a business to include both a business and succession plan.

14. The Phoenix Regional fire service agencies recognize the need to develop a fire service related succession plan as an approach to address the leadership needs facing local professional fire service organizations for preparing the next generation to be the next fire chiefs.

15. That the Peoria fire department along with other Phoenix regional departments team up with the local colleges to provide a higher level of curriculum to include fire management programs in order to prepare aspiring Chief Officers for promotional opportunities and to integrate the earning of college credit to work towards a degrees of higher learning.

16. That the regional Life Safety Council adopts the recommended action items comprised from this research project, to increase professionalism in our fire service organizations by encouraging its members to seek formal education, provide leadership by supporting both the National Fire Academy and the International Fire Chiefs programs.
REFERENCES


Appendix A

Cover Letter

Dear Fire Chief,

My name is Larry Rooney and I am a Deputy Fire Chief for the City of Peoria Fire Department. As a requirement for an executive fire officer course taken at the National Fire Academy, I am to complete a research paper. I have chosen to research the value of succession planning within the Phoenix regional area. Please take just a few minutes of your time to complete the attached survey questionnaire. Your professional opinion on this subject is a necessary part of the research paper. All data gathered will be held in strict confidence. The results of this survey or project will not be sold, or used for any commercial profit. If you are unable to complete the survey for any reason, please assign it to someone that is next in line of succession so your department’s views may be represented. Please return your completed survey questionnaire in the manner in which would be most convenient for you. You may reply by e-mail to Larryr@peoriaaz.com or you can print out the survey questionnaire and fax it to (623) 773-7620 for my attention. Please feel free to give me a call at (623) 773-7905 if you wish to discuss the survey, the project, or if you have any questions or concerns. Lastly, if it is not too much trouble, I would like to tally up the final results of the survey by this Friday, April 9th, 2004. Your timely response would be greatly appreciated. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Respectfully,

Lawrence Rooney
Deputy Fire Chief
Peoria Fire Department

REMINDER: Attachment: Succession Plan Questionnaire
Appendix B

Succession Planning Statement Questionnaire

Please rate the next ten statements questions according to the following scale:

1  2  3  4
Strongly Agree  Agree  Disagree  Strongly Disagree

1. It is a fire department’s responsibility to provide professional development opportunities to its internal members for promotion to the top position of Fire Chief. _____

2. A well run fire service organization has a plan for fire chief succession in place._____  

3. The fire service as a whole does a good job of preparing its members to take over the role of Fire Chief. _____

4. Having a succession plan in place would raise the level of professionalism within your department. _____

5. A succession plan would help the organization make the transition easier. _____

6. Fire departments should be run more like a business. _____

7. Fire departments are like a family business. _____

8. It is solely up to an individual to prepare himself/herself for the position of fire chief. _____

9. A succession plan should help in the support of the next fire chief. _____

10. A succession plan could be used as a road map for those who are preparing for the position. _____
Appendix C

Fire Chief Perspective Questionnaire

Please answer the next Ten questions by circling either Yes or No.

1. Were you hired as the fire chief from within your department?
   Yes   No

2. Do you feel the next fire chief will come from within your department?
   Yes   No

3. Is anyone in your department qualified and prepared to take over as fire chief?
   Yes   No

4. Does your department have a succession plan in place?
   Yes   No

5. Does your fire department have a business plan?
   Yes   No

6. Do you feel a succession plan would help in providing direction for the department after your departure?
   Yes   No

7. Would the transition to “next fire chief” go any smoother if a succession plan were in place?
   Yes   No

8. Are the Assistant or Deputy Chiefs in your department preparing to compete for the fire chief’s position?
   Yes   No

9. Do you feel that either the National Fire Academy’s “Executive Fire Officer Program” or the International Fire Chief’s “Chief Officer Designation” courses help prepare candidates for the Fire Chief’s position?
   Yes   No

10. Would you be able to make a recommendation on who will be your successor as fire chief?
    Yes   No
Appendix D

Memo

To: Robert McKibben, Fire Chief  
From: Lawrence Rooney, Deputy Fire Chief  
Subject: Succession Plan

Chief, these recommendations are suggested action items to help the Peoria fire department prepare a succession plan for its members and to make recommendations to the Regional Life Safety Council as a positive step to provide leadership throughout the region and to increase professionalism in the fire service. The following recommendations were developed based on the research project I completed for the executive leadership course as part of the executive fire officer program requirements:

- That the Peoria fire department devises a clear and concise succession plan to include career development opportunities, required formal education, and job related experience outlined for those aspiring to promote to the fire chief position.
- That the Peoria fire chief set the direction and standards of the succession plan and that it is supported by the chief officers.
- That the plan be tied into the fire departments overall fire master plan to meet and compliment the goals previously set forth.
- That the succession plan incorporates the Peoria fire department’s core values of Team, Trust, Efficiency and Professionalism.
- That the fire chief provide opportunities for his executive officers for exposure to higher level programs, projects, policy making, and local politics.
- That the succession plan be coordinated to our overall strategic plan and be interlinked with our department’s policies and standard operating procedures.
• That we take succession planning to our labor/management executive steering committee at our annual retreat and make it our number one priority over the next year to ensure by-
in, and ultimately be an institutionalized practice.

• That the Peoria fire chief implement incremental increases of opportunities in preparing the department’s Battalion and Deputy and Fire Chiefs so they can develop skills necessary to stay current on today’s fire service administrative and city policies and tomorrow’s technological advances.

• That the Peoria fire department encourages its members to seek formal education in a related field to help prepare them for promotion and to achieve required degrees.

• The Peoria Fire department develops a comprehensive training program for its members that will address the challenging and diverse issues confronting fire chiefs today.

• That the Peoria fire department encourage its members to seek career developing opportunities like the National Fire Academy’s Executive Fire Officer Program and to seek Chief Officer’s Designation from the International Fire Chiefs Association.

• That both the Phoenix regional fire service administrations and the Firefighter’s local labor union, work together to come up with an acceptable succession plan that will benefit the fire service regionally and ensure that aspiring fire chiefs are prepared to fill promotional vacancies to fire chief when they open and are well prepared in order for them to be successful leaders.

• That the Phoenix regional Life Safety Consortium develop a board of directors to include representation from each agency to provide guidance to fire departments in working towards changing the fire service to be run more efficiently like a business to include both a business and succession plan.
• The Phoenix Regional fire service agencies recognize the need to develop a fire service related succession plan as an approach to address the leadership needs facing local professional fire service organizations for preparing the next generation to be the next fire chiefs.

• That the Peoria fire department along with other Phoenix regional departments team up with the local colleges to provide a higher level of curriculum to include fire management programs in order to prepare aspiring Chief Officers for promotional opportunities and to integrate the earning of college credit to work towards a degrees of higher learning.

• That the regional Life Safety Council adopts the recommended action items comprised from this research project, to increase professionalism in our fire service organizations by encouraging its members to seek formal education, provide leadership by supporting both the National Fire Academy and the International Fire Chiefs programs.

Chief, I real feel that we can lead the way if we were to implement a succession plan that would benefit our department members and our whole organization. Please feel free to contact me if you have any further questions.
Appendix J

BIOGRAPHY

Lawrence Rooney is a 20-year veteran of the Peoria Fire Department, Peoria, Arizona, where he currently serves as the Deputy Fire Chief responsible for the Support and Community Service Divisions. Prior to his current position, he completed four-years as the Deputy Chief of Operations. He has served the Peoria Fire Department in every rank and position, as a Firefighter, Engineer, Captain (both engine and ladder), Technical Rescue Technician, and Recruit Training Officer assigned to the Phoenix Fire Department Regional Fire Academy. He then severed in the capacity of Battalion Chief in charge of the Operations Division as well as B-Shift Command Responder.

He has overseen promotional examinations and firefighter recruitment for the Department for the past fifteen years. In addition, he has severed as an Instructor of Fire Science courses at Glendale Community College, and currently serves on the College’s Curriculum Advisory Board.

He earned his Associate Arts degree in 1980 in General Education from Orange Coast College, his Associate Science degree in 1982 in Fire Technology from Santa Ana College, his Bachelors of Science degree in Public Safety Administration from Grand Canyon University in 1999 and his Masters Degree in Education with Distinction at Northern Arizona University in 2002. He is a Certified Public Manager from Arizona State University and is also a Graduate of the Rocky Mountain Leadership Program from the University of Colorado.