A Study of Leadership as it Relates to Morale and Motivation
on the Sioux City Fire Department

Tom Everett
National Fire Academy Executive Fire Officer Program
Executive Development
Sioux City Fire Department
Sioux City, Iowa

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Appendices Not Included. Please visit the Learning Resource Center on the Web at http://www.lrc.dhs.gov/ to learn how to obtain this report in its entirety through Interlibrary Loan.
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Abstract

The problem was that a recent diversity survey indicated low levels of morale and motivation on the Sioux City Fire Department (SCFD) among the line officers and firefighters caused by staff level officers that led to low levels of productivity. The purpose of this research was to identify causes related to those findings, uncover areas that could be improved upon, and to make recommendations as to how the department could realize improved levels of morale and motivation for increased production. This was accomplished by exploring leadership and management techniques, best practices of other successful organizations, and by asking leadership experts, line employees, and staff what could be done to improve morale and motivation. The results of the research indicated what the problem was and resulted in final recommendations that included creating a long-term orientation, improving communication, soft skills training, change management, and use of a leadership and team development system.
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Introduction

Motivation and morale are key components to creating a high performance work environment. On SCFD a recent diversity study indicated low levels of motivation and morale. This is a problem because motivation plus ability equals performance (Whetten & Cameron, 2005, p.300), meaning the performance levels of the department are not as good as they could and should be while SCFD strives to serve the community.

Problem Statement

The problem is that current management practices employed by Sioux City Fire Department (SCFD) staff officers is resulting in poor morale and motivation as expressed by line officers and firefighters which has decreases organizational productivity.

Statement of Purpose

The purpose of this research is to identify managerial and leadership techniques and skills that will aid the staff officers in improving the morale and motivation of the line officers and firefighters of SCFD.

Research Questions

1. What leadership and management techniques and skills will lead to increased morale and motivation of employees?

2. What have other organizations found to be effective leadership and management techniques and skills that will increase morale and motivation among employees?

3. What techniques and skills do line officers and firefighters say would positively impact their morale and motivation?
4. What techniques and skills do staff officers say work to get them involved with improving morale and motivation among employees?

Research Method

Descriptive research methods were employed including interviews with recognized leadership experts and questionnaires for line employees and staff members.

Background and Significance

A diversity survey administered to the members of the SCFD in March of 2004 by an outside consulting company along with subsequent departmental meetings have indicated that SCFD suffers from low levels of motivation leading to decreased productivity. As an organization charged with the protection of the community, the department must provide services which are both efficient and effective by competent, motivated professionals. These expectations have been made readily apparent by the citizens of the community, the city council, the city manager, and current management practices. Without change in the level of motivation of department members, the city, the citizens, and the department itself faces serious consequences.

When it comes to motivation and morale, perception is reality, and for that reason this department needs to take the results of the diversity survey seriously and make every effort to educate and fulfill the needs of all department members to increase the levels of pride, motivation, personal ownership and engagement on the job. Not withstanding other challenges faced by the department, this alone has the potential to change the face of the department for the betterment of all involved. If left unaddressed, or if the change initiative fails, a serious problem involving the future of the department, the city, and most importantly, the citizens of the community who depend on may become reality.
**Problem Uncovered**

The City of Sioux City employs the use of a diversity committee comprised of representatives from each city department. This committee serves at the discretion and direction of the city manager who reports to the city council. The purpose of this committee is to explore diversity in both the legal sense and the soft skills sense to determine if the city is complying with federal regulations and treating all employees with dignity, fairness, and respect.

In 2004 the diversity committee approached the city manager requesting that a diversity initiative be completed for all departments. Lacking further direction the city manager invited several consulting groups to purpose actions that would positively affect the issue of diversity throughout the cities workforce. Management Associates of Sioux City was chosen after an interview and several meetings both to discover the needs and expectations of the city and the ideas that Management Associates had to improve diversity efforts and understanding among city departments.

In an interview held with two consultants from Management Associates, Mr. Allen Scheffer and Ms. Nancy Braun, on May 11th, 2005 these representatives explained the diversity survey that indicated the need for a motivation initiative within SCFD. Mr. Scheffer explained that Management Associates decided the first step in a process leading to improved diversity awareness was to survey city workers to see what the level of awareness was and to identify diversity opportunities and problems. From this survey it would be possible to make recommendations for change if necessary. He went on to describe how Management Associates created a list of questions that the diversity committee could choose to incorporate in to the initial survey. In the end, fifteen questions were selected. Ms. Bruan explained that during the initial conversations with the diversity committee Management Associates was careful to expand
the definition of diversity from one of purely race, religion, sex, and other protected categories, to a more inclusive use of the terminology that included how employees of the city felt they were treated. Management Associates believes that while diversity does in fact include the legal issues raised by Title VI of the Civil Rights Act pertaining to minorities, there is a more powerful aspect to the topic that includes the differences that make each person unique. Whether these advantages are being properly utilized is often the difference between a motivated and productive workforce of high performance and an under-achieving culture. Management Associates stated that the advantages to teamwork, leadership, relationships, and performance are all strongly tied to and reliant on utilizing the positive aspects of understanding and benefiting from the differences that make us all unique.

The purpose of the survey was two-fold. The survey was intended to measure if people felt they were treated with fairness, dignity, respect, and value. The legal issues of diversity were also measured and considered by utilizing the information in the question section of the survey to determine if differences existed in how minorities and protected categories were treated. The survey was given to all employees in February of 2005.

The survey allowed participants to grade the accuracy of the questions from one to five with the following assigned values given to each number.

1. Strongly Disagree
2. Disagree
3. Sometimes
4. Agree
5. Strongly Agree
Management Associates allowed the diversity committee to choose the questions with limited input so that each of the major areas the survey was intended to measure was represented. The following is a list of the questions presented to the employees of the city.

Figure 1.

Management Associates Diversity Survey Questions for the City of Sioux City:

1. The way I am treated at work has nothing to do my race, ethnic origin, gender, age, religion, or the type of job I have.
2. At work my opinion seems to count.
3. At work I have the opportunity to be involved in the decision making process.
4. I am treated with respect and dignity by the people in the organization.
5. This organization fosters an environment in which people are treated with dignity and respect.
6. People in this organization seem to care about me as a person.
7. I am confident that I will be supported by the people in this organization.
8. I feel encouraged to come up with new ideas and to perform work assignments.
9. Within this organization it is safe to speak out regarding discrimination issues.
10. I am provided opportunities to learn and grow.
11. City employment opportunities are equal and fair to all qualified individuals.
12. I feel that my talents and abilities are fully utilized by the organization.
13. Internal promotions are handled equitably with careful consideration of all qualified applicants.
14. This organization provides an environment that supports cooperation, teamwork, and mutual understanding among employees.
The results of the survey were tabulated for each department. In March of 2005 the members of SCFD had a meeting with Management Associates to view the results of the survey and to discuss the meaning and implications. The initial statements at this meeting by Management Associates explained the processes and the results of the survey city wide. The consultants explained the results of the fire department survey and allowed for input and questions.

Management Associates reported that the survey indicated that department members felt that the city, and the fire department to a lesser degree, did a good job at compliance with the legalities of the diversity issue. As the discussion turned to the lower scores on the survey it became obvious that firefighters also felt that they were not treated with dignity, respect, and fairness. Further, firefighters as a group felt that this was creating a serious problem with motivation on the department in general.

As the meeting progressed Management Associates recommended that the department meet in groups of firefighters, line officers, and staff officers to ascertain the true implications of the discussion and survey results. A schedule of meetings was established to discover the root cause of these issues.

Management Associates first met with the line officers comprised of the department’s frontline supervisors including the lieutenants and captains two weeks after the results were released. At this meeting the officers described several problem areas and described specific examples of each. The meeting indicated that there was a lack of effort or ability on the part of the staff officers to incorporate leadership techniques that would develop or create a motivational
climate for the firefighters and the line officers of the department. Some of the specific problems outlined were:

- Staff officers employing their authority to belittle, threaten, and punish department members.
- The line officers felt they were micro-managed.
- The line officers felt that their authority had been undermined by the staff officers.
- Line officers stated they no longer had the ability to make even simple decisions without fear of reprisal.
- They also felt that the current promotional system was unfair and created animosity among members of the department while promoting several persons that had little respect or leadership abilities.

The consensus of the meeting was that the department needed to investigate soft skills training for managers, investigate the promotional process, and the fire chief would need to expect and enforce a different leadership style from staff officers.

The line officers asked that a meeting be held between Management Associates and firefighters to ascertain if they felt the same way or if they felt the responsibility lie more with the line officers than the line officers believed and were allowing for. These results were reported to the fire chief and then to the staff officers. A meeting was set two weeks out to determine what firefighters felt were the root problems creating these motivation issues.

Management Associates reports that during the meeting with firefighters they expressed the same viewpoint as the line officers. The staff employed poor leadership techniques and this was leading to poor motivation on the department. They stated that:

- Discipline was the main form of learning and development on the department.
• The firefighters felt that their opinions mattered little if any to the staff.
• Firefighters felt that given the circumstances that the staff had created, the line officers, in general, did a good job at providing what they can for development and motivation to firefighters.

The fire chief was again briefed by Management Associates regarding the details of the meeting. The fire chief then briefed staff with Management Associates present on the results and implications. Management Associates report that the staff initially took a strong defensive position to the results of the meetings and blamed the line personnel for any motivation and productivity problems on the department. Management Associates also reports that by the end of the meeting several staff officers had begun to realize and communicate that they felt there was allot they could do differently to create an environment that would foster the respect, dignity, and fairness that was sought by both the diversity committee and the line employees of SCFD. They also expressed that they felt they were leading as expected and had not received any training or direction that would contradict their current styles. The chief then met one on one with each staff officer to explain his expectations and had them put in writing personal goals and changes for their individual performance regarding leadership and interpersonal relationships. Those expectations, as reported by Management Associates have not, to date, been made public.

A second meeting was held with the line officers, Management Associates, and the fire chief on May 5th, 2005. The officers were advised as to the results of the previous meetings. The chief reinforced his commitment to the change process. The line officers were asked if they noticed a change in the actions and reactions of staff as of late pertaining to their leadership styles to which several members felt their had been positive change made. A long discussion ensued in which the line officers agreed that they too would have to make serious changes to support and make
possible the cultural change they sought along with staff, the chief, and all department members if this initiative was going to work.

Management Associates explained the purpose of this meeting was to brainstorm ideas for creating the desired change. Step one would include defining a vision for relationships and leadership in the future at all levels of the department. Step two would be to define goals that could be measured and would propel the department toward the desired vision of a new culture. Management Associates asked that the line officers create clear definitions of the perceived problems prior to moving forward with a vision of the new culture and goals. Several key points came from this meeting. The officers wanted:

- To create a culture that inspired learning, not discipline for certain mistakes. In order to accomplish this they would have to have clear values on which to base decisions and less stringent rules and regulations.
- The line officers asked for more responsibility and agreed that they would accept the accountability for these increases.
- The officers felt that the department needed to develop leadership skills and interpersonal skills at all levels in the organization.
- Better communication, more positive reinforcement, and trust were identified as those issues that would make the biggest difference in the department’s culture. A culture that involved more apparent pride, less negative talk and grapevining about other department members, more development in a coaching and mentoring role for all officers, and respect for every member of the department were discussed as requirements of the vision.

In general there was little animosity toward staff officers in these meetings. One thing it seems most line personnel realized is that staff learned from previous assistant chiefs how to lead
and manage in a manner consistent with past and even current expectations of the chief and city. They are all fine managers and do well technically but have not had any performance measures or expectations based on leadership. These men execute the department mission well under the old style of management that has persisted for more than a century on this department. Many of the staff members do have good leadership skills and abilities. Some of these are used effectively while others are not. Staff also has issues with management above their positions when it comes to providing for motivation on the department. This research focused on staff officers because that is what the diversity survey and subsequent meetings have indicated most effect the line employee’s motivation and morale.

Importance of Problem Personally

As a captain or line officer on SCFD and a candidate for promotion to assistant chief on staff, the importance of this topic can not be underestimated personally. As a captain I provide everything possible to support my team in a servant leadership role. My personal frustrations come only from a lack of direction in terms of a strong vision from the staff level and low levels of motivation outside of my team. My team has created a vision and I provide soft skills or people skills training when possible to team members. As a graduate of a masters degree program in leadership, professor on the topic, and business owner charged with transforming individuals, leaders, teams, and organizations using the most effective leadership techniques, I understand the frustrations of the line firefighters and officers evidenced in the diversity survey as they pertain to a lack of development and motivational leadership from the staff officers.

Past, Present, and Future Implications

Past implications of the problem reflect a failure to see a positive management and leadership initiatives through to realization. These failed efforts left the department to fall back on
traditional management practices that had served the department and community for generations. The closest representation of this style is Fredrick Taylor’s Scientific Management style characterized by a Theory X mentality in which management assumes workers do not want to work and are inherently or naturally going to avoid work and will not self motivate even given the right climate. This combined with a very para-military style of hierarchy incorporating a strong chain of command has provided for the success of our general mission, but has failed at producing the kind of long term benefit reaped with high performance work environments.

Presently this department has the opportunity to reverse past practices and to build a future organization that is prepared for the challenges that lie ahead by capitalizing on the strengths and energy of the department’s people. This includes a partnership at all levels in the organization and a strong commitment to the vision of a new department based on respect, dignity, fairness, and value. The opportunity exists to make cultural changes that in the future will provide for the individual needs of each firefighter to experience a rewarding career that allows for maximum buy in, development, participation, and reward in serving customers.

The failure of the current initiative would result in greater levels of change aversion, poor leadership practices, and lower levels of motivation and productivity in the future. If not addressed, the city will face turnover, further morale issues, customer complaints, lowered insurance ratings, and a city not as healthy or safe as it could be.

Previously, members of the department became stoic towards change following failed attempts and subsequent fall backs of leadership initiatives. The most recent attempt was one that involved the teachings of Edward Demming known as Total Quality Management.

Members who remember this attempt at change and its failure are bitter towards the idea of another change process that could ultimately be met with negative consequences should it fail. A
lack of trust, poor communication, and poor interpersonal relationships resulted from this initiative. This has been apparent in management verses union disputes, low productivity, as indicated in the city managers performance reports, and the low morale that plagues the department today as evidenced by the survey conducted recently by Management Associates.

The Deming training and efforts took place in the 1980’s and has been held as an example of failure on the cities part to see a positive change through to fruition. There is no sign of any positives that Deming methods left on the department or any changes in management styles other than through individual learning or effort.

Considering the fact that the city and SCFD has tried to change in the past and failed, this initiative will be instrumental in its impact and importance as proof that the department not only can change, but must change to accommodate the demands of the citizens we protect.

*Pertinent Organizational Data*

Sioux City is a growing and changing retail center and community of 85,000 residents covering an area of 60 square miles. The city is located in a multi city, tri state area consisting of Northwest Iowa, Northeast Nebraska, and Southwest South Dakota called Siouxland with a population exceeding 120,000. The department is a tax supported organization with seven firehouses, three truck or ladder companies, nine engine companies, several specialty rigs, and 114 personnel serving the community. On any given day 33 career firefighters are staffing those firehouses and equipment to protect the city from fire, disaster, for rescue, and emergency medical emergencies. Of an eleven million dollar budget over 90% of the tax dollars go towards salaries and personnel related benefits. An organizational chart is found in Appendix I.
Relation to the USFA Mission

This applied research project applies to the mission of the United States Fire Administrations (USFA), Executive Development (R123) Self-Study Guide (2004), criteria number five which states: “5. To respond appropriately in a timely manner to emerging issues” (p.4). The fire service in general is facing a crisis of leadership as a new generation of firefighters does not respond to para-military management styles and demands instead high performance work environments that utilize their talents. This is an emerging issue because it is imperative that SCFD recognize that productivity is related to motivation and that interpersonal relationships and people skills are a foundational element to unlocking the potential and power that many organizations and businesses have realized.

As an organization, SCFD can provide better service with happy and healthy professionals who are dedicated to their career, their leaders, and to the values and visions they hold. The workplace can and should be a place where all members have to opportunity to realize the acquisition of certain inherent needs that all humans have from safety and security to inclusion, personal development, and finally to self actualization. It is only through the fully realized potential of the people of the fire service that USFA will achieve it’s mission and that is only possible with motivated individuals at all levels in fire departments across the country. This problem is particularly relevant to the Executive Fire Officer Program’s freshman year, Executive Development, which seeks to focus the attention of EFO’s as leaders on transforming fire and emergency services to reflect the power of diversity that makes our communities so strong. It is recognition of this power in each department that will enhance our collective emotional intelligence, allowing for more developed leadership, understanding of self and others, improved motivation, production, and enhanced outcomes that we all seek.
How Research Relates to the Problem

This research identifies the actual areas that leadership has failed in creating an environment that fosters motivation. It will also identify best practices for solving the problem at hand and point out specific organizational areas of need. The research will result in several recommendations that our department may elect to try in the efforts to make changes culturally.

The questionnaires were used to allow for recommendations to be made based on needs, limitations, and strengths of the department. One questionnaire compares SCFD’s scores in major areas associated with success to other organizations worldwide indicating a best practices recommendation for the department. Extensive research and interviews will identify further areas of potential methods and styles of leadership that could be incorporated to best foster the proper environment and change areas of concern.

Approach to Problem

A descriptive research method including interviews with recognized leadership experts, and questionnaires for line employees, and staff officers was used to find out what leadership techniques would help, and what other organizations have done successfully to solve this problem.

Literature Review

Research Question One:

1. What leadership and management techniques and skills will lead to increased morale and motivation in employees?

In their book Strategy, A View from the Top, deKluyver and Pearce II (2003, p.35) discuss the need for a people strategy as it relates to hiring, developing and retention. Retention is a motivation and needs, or rewards issue where development of leadership skills leads to
motivation and is a motivator itself. A much greater emphasis is being placed on attracting, rewarding, and retaining talent at all levels of the organization. A focus on continuous improvement through skill development is an important element of this people strategy. Many companies have come to realize that developing tomorrow’s skills, individually and collectively, is the key to high performance. Leadership skills, in particular, are in increasing demand. Increased competitive intensity has created a greater need for leadership at all levels of an organization. The higher pace of change and greater uncertainty in the strategic environment also has increased the difficulty of providing effective leadership. To summarize the results of a global study (p133) shows that there is a ten step approach to creating an effective talent strategy:

1. Create a clear and compelling strategy and vision for the company.
2. Identify the core capabilities needed to excel at this strategy and to continuously improve performance, distinguishing between those skills available externally and those that must be developed in house.
3. Seek out the best sources of these skills wherever they are available and offer those individuals opportunities to advance and contribute.
4. Understand the factors that are most important in attracting and retaining individuals with these key capabilities and in gaining their commitment to the enterprise.
5. Recognize that different groups of employees want different things from work, and that their priorities are likely to shift as they progress through the various stages of their lives and careers.
6. Create multiple career paths to replace the declining number of managerial promotion slots in today’s flatter organizations.

7. Craft individual development opportunities so employees can build the capabilities that create maximum value for themselves and the company.

8. Hold both the employees and the management accountable for meeting development objectives and sharing knowledge they gain with the organization.

9. Tie rewards and recognition to organizational and team performance and enhancement of skills, rather than placing too strong an emphasis on pay-for-individual performance.

10. Seek opportunities to rapidly enhance the company’s talent.

This indicates that a clear and compelling vision along with opportunities to contribute, finding out what motivates individuals, individual development opportunities, and leadership development are keys to retention and satisfaction long term which is a consequence of improved motivation and morale.

Clear and compelling vision is a common theme found throughout the literature review as a first and critical step. In Good to Great, Jim Collins (2001, p. 96) shows three pieces, called the Hedgehog Concept that must be in place to attain organizational greatness. One of these three concepts is: “What are you passionate about?” The good to great companies focused on those activities that ignite their passion. The concept is not to stimulate passion but to discover what makes you passionate. The energy required for change and for high performance comes from linking people’s passion with the organization’s vision.

In his book The Fifth Discipline, Peter Senge (1990, p. 206) explains that if people are assumed to be motivated only by self interest, then an organization automatically develops a
highly political style, with the result that people must continually look out for their own self-interest in order to survive. This is an atmosphere in which creating motivation and high levels of morale become exceedingly difficult if not impossible. An alternative assumption is that, over and above self-interest, people truly want to be a part of something larger than themselves, doing worthwhile work. They want to contribute toward building something important. And they value doing it with team-members. A cornerstone of Senge’s personal mastery concept is that these people have a sense of purpose and that, when people reflect on what they truly want, most discover that aspects of their vision concern their families, their communities, and their organizations.

People need to be involved and have needs beyond self-interest that must be considered in the motivation equation. Blanchard and Stoner (2004, p. 82) explain a compelling vision as a basic tenant of creating a motivational work environment, they:

- Help us understand what business we’re really in.
- Provides guidelines that help us make daily decisions.
- Provides a picture of the desired future that we can actually see.
- Are enduring.
- Are about being great, not solely about beating the competition.
- Are inspiring, not expressed solely in numbers.
- Touch the heart and spirits of everyone.
- Help each person see how he or she can contribute.

Forsyth (1999, p. 46) suggests that habits, goals, instincts, expectations, and drive prompt group members to take action. The word motivation comes from the verb “to move.” Forsyth describes the level-of aspiration theory as one that determines level of motivation by the situation
they find themselves in as compared to the initial aspirations and current reality. He believes that over time people may change their expectations as they fail or succeed. This indicates that overly optimistic goals can be damaging to motivation. Behaviors that are followed by positive consequences, such as rewards, will occur more frequently, whereas behaviors that are followed by negative consequences will become rarer. This shows positive reinforcement and small wins strategies while setting realistic goals are key to developing motivation among employees. By definition, all behaviors are reinforced if they continue.

In Fire Department Company Officer by Goodson and Sneed (1998 p. 65) the section titled Dimensions of Leadership discusses the fact that fire officers have influence with their team and department. It also discusses the need to use this power positively and that it will require different styles for different individuals. An effective leader is one who can:

- Make other people feel strong and help them feel that they can influence their future and their environment.
- Builds others’ trust in the leader.
- Structure cooperative rather than competitive relationships.
- Resolve conflicts by confronting issues together rather than by avoiding or forcing a particular situation.
- Stimulate and promote goal-oriented thinking and behavior.

These leadership techniques and skills indicate a need to balance both a concern for production with a concern for people. It clearly states that the job of a leader is to assist and develop others while creating an environment of integrity and cooperation. Clear direction in the form of goals is again indicated as a necessary component of motivation and positive relations.
Whetton and Cameron (2005 p. 300) suggest that motivation is the product of desire and commitment. The question is how to develop the atmosphere to foster motivation.

There are six elements of an integrative motivation program (p. 306).

- Establish moderately difficult goals that are understood and accepted.
- Remove personal and organizational obstacles to performance.
- Use rewards and discipline appropriately to extinguish unacceptable behavior and encourage exceptional performance.
- Provide salient internal and external incentives.
- Distribute rewards equitably.
- Provide timely rewards and specific, accurate and honest feedback on performance.

Blanchard and Miller (2001 p. 95) indicate that there are five secrets of great leaders: See the future (vision), engage and develop others, reinvent continuously, value results and relationships, and personalize the organizational values. This formula is one in which the term servant leadership is defined. Servant leadership being those leaders who feel it is their duty as a leader to support, develop, and motivate his or her team. In other words, their view on leadership is that they work for their followers. This is a healthy viewpoint for developing, not only the line personnel but also the trust and interpersonal relationships necessary to improve motivation, morale, and finally productivity.

**Research Question Two**

2. What have other organizations found to be effective leadership and management techniques and skills that will increase morale and motivation of employees?

In Practice What You Preach David Maister (2001 p. 17) writes of Tramster, a marketing consulting firm that achieved a performance rating on the Nine Factors Survey from 23% to 47%
higher than the average office and is increasing profits more than twice as fast as other organizations in the study. The example is held as one of success. Tramster’s scores on their survey indicate ten areas where they attribute their success.

1. Enthusiasm and morale around here have never been higher.
2. Considering the office as a whole the compensation system is managed equitably and fairly.
3. The amount of work I have keeps me challenged but not overworked.
4. Management around here is trusted.
5. Considering my contribution, I think I am paid fairly compared to others in the office.
6. People within our office always treat others with respect.
7. Management of our office is successful in fostering commitment and loyalty.
8. Communication between the office’s management and people at my level is very good.
9. This is a fun place to work.
10. I am highly satisfied with my job.

These results, while not exactly the same, are similar in nature to the other eight case studies listed in Maister’s book. They indicate that successful organizations have leadership that fosters communication, respect, fairness, commitment, and satisfaction. Maister states: “The top twenty percent of the offices did better in virtually every category and are those most financially successful organizations as well. Here are top items where financially successful organizations most outperformed the rest.”

1. Management listens.
2. Management values input.

3. Management is trusted.

4. Managers are good coaches.

5. Management communication is good.


7. People treat others with respect. (p.28)

All seven of these items have to do with the behavior of individual managers, rather than corporate policies.

Tichy (1997, p. 163) promotes the idea that the possibility of achieving a desired goal is the very ingredient that generates the energy required to achieve that goal and to tackle new ones. This means that one of the most important things that leaders do is to build the determination and self confidence in others to help them become leaders as well. This follows a story of General Motors (GM’s) struggle with a plant that was losing money and would close if something did not change. Tichy (p.163) says that Tom Tiller of GM realized that people have vast amounts of energy; it’s just that at this plant it was being used to complain and make excuses. Once Tiller listened, involved the employees and assisted them, the employees felt it was possible to make this plant a winner. Tiller understood that if he could get the employee’s energies or motivation focused on leading this change that his plan would be successful. GM motivated their people by creating leadership through communication, clear vision, personal accountability and leadership development in this plant. They realize the job of the leader is to gain the energies of the people for the vision.

Bossidy and Charan (2002, p. 84) believe that the behavior of a business leader is the behavior of the organization and so it becomes the foundation of the culture. They state that
Jack Welsh of GM also recognized that it’s not useful to beat other people up when they make a mistake. To the contrary, that’s the time to coach them, encourage them, and help them regain their self-confidence (p. 83). This indicates that powerful leadership includes high degrees of humility, self mastery, teaching, and highly developed locus of control among leadership.

Senge (1990 p. 288) speaks of the successful company Analog Devices, Inc. philosophies. In traditional hierarchical organization the top management will do all of the thinking while the employees will do all of the work as told. In a learning organization each individual must be taught, and encouraged to think and act. The importance of development and empowerment at all levels in an organization cannot be underestimated when discussing the power of human capital and motivation in organizations. Learning organizations are those organizations that foster partner-like relationships with all employees and believe in the power of continuous learning to grow and compete. These partner-like organizations utilize and foster motivation as a necessary ingredient to reap the full rewards and potential people can offer an organization. According to Senge (p. 288) it is through the involvement, learning, development, and empowerment that this partner level motivation can exist in these learning organizations.

Research Question Three

3. What techniques and skills do line officers and firefighters say would positively impact their morale and motivation?

While the results of the questionnaires in this research project answer this question to the point, there are several examples of studies done that indicate what positively impacts the morale, motivation, and performance of employees in a wide ranging variety of industries.

In Readings in Human Resources, Ford and Fottler (1997 p.227) suggest that the empowerment process is one of directed autonomy where employees are given an overall
direction yet considerable freedom concerning how they go about following the direction. The authors go on to explain several examples including GM’s Saturn plant, Chapparel Steel, and W. L. Gore and Associates in which this empowerment culture not only raises productivity but also morale and motivation, which are necessary ingredients in improved productivity. Ford and Fottler go on to say: “Empowerment also necessitates sharing with employees information and knowledge that enables them to understand and contribute to organizational performance, rewarding them based on the organization’s performance, and giving them the authority to make decisions that influence organizational outcomes” (p.227). This shows that the motivation realized at the organizations listed in the text utilized leadership skills and traits that included empowerment, communication and information sharing, rewards, and authority with responsibility, indicating high levels of development and trust in these organizations.

In Action Learning in Action, Marquardt (1999 p. 110) often times refers to the importance of the motivation of people in an organization in his writing you can identify seven critical roles of a leader in the 21st century:

1. Systems thinker. Able to solve problems by properly connecting issues, data points, and events. Seeing the whole rather than parts.

2. Change agent. Understanding of and high degree of competence in creating and managing change for their organizations.

3. Innovator and risk taker. Truly open to the wide range of perspectives and possibilities essential to generating choices.

4. Servant leader and steward. True leadership is emerges from those whose primary motivation is to help others.
5. Polycronic coordinator. Able to coordinate many things at once and work collaboratively with others on unfamiliar problems.

6. Instructor, coach, mentor. Helping others learn and develop.

7. Visionary and vision builder. Must be able to inspire others through the development and commitment to a vision. (p.110)

These areas deemed essential to the 21st century leader are, interestingly, the same competencies that employees feel throughout the book, are necessary in order to have an environment that fosters motivation in an organization.

Along the lines of Action Learning in Action, in On Leadership, John Gardner (1990) lists several attributes necessary for effective leadership and points out that leadership itself is bestowed on a leader by the followers, who if perceiving or determined these traits are missing will not be committed to the organization. The tasks of leadership as espoused by Gardner necessary to gain followers include:

- Envisioning goals.
- Affirming values.
- Motivating.
- Managing.
- Achieving workable unity.
- Explaining (ability to communicate).
- Serving as a symbol.
- Representing the group.
- Renewing (change agent). (p.11-22)
The behaviors and skills of effective leaders include motivating employees through several similar lists and findings from experts in the field. It is not a stretch to state that employees and people in general want to be treated with respect, dignity, and fairness which necessitate good communication, vision, opportunity for continued development, and change as key factors in motivating employees in any organization. Achievement, recognition, meaningful work, responsibility, and expectations are all strong motivators. Blanchard, Fowler, and Hawkins (p.61) believe there are five points of power; position power, task power, personal power, relationship power, and knowledge power. In order to provide leadership and not just management, staff must understand that of these five points of power, position power is the least effective in creating a motivational environment and positive long term results. According to Blanchard, Fowler, and Hawkins (2005, p.61) an understanding and practice of this knowledge by organizational leadership would be a positive step for line employees.

There is a strong element of personal choice found throughout these areas that line personnel feel would positively impact their morale and motivation. Once a motivational environment is created it is up to the individual to do something positive with it. In their book Fish, Lundin, Paul, and Christensen (2000 p.78) suggest that there are four things that employees must do to fully realize the potential of energy in a workplace:

- Choose you attitude. It is a matter of personal choice.
- Play. Have fun and display energy at work.
- Make their day. Engage customers, both internal and external in ways that create energy and goodwill.
- Be present. Being fully present for coworkers, customers, and the work itself.

*Research Question Four*
4. What techniques and skills do staff officers say would work to get them involved with improving motivation and morale among employees?

While this question is similar to question three in that the true answers specific to SCFD’s staff that determine what methods will work for them are indicated in a questionnaire there is strong evidence of leadership initiatives that will work to motivate employees and can be successfully implemented by those who wish to make the change. This makes the issue of identifying successful styles and behaviors secondary to the difficulty encountered with accepting that change is necessary and worth the effort in the eyes of the staff officers. The styles outlined by staff in the surveys conducted are all inline with those behaviors consistent with what the experts have said in previous research questions above. The methods are solid and can be successful. It is the change process involved under the surface of this question that demands attention here.

Buckingham and Coffman (1999) state that in order for employees to reach the summit, meaning a highly engaged and motivated state of being at work, great managers focus on insuring that employees can positively answer the following six questions:

- Do I know what is expected of me at work?
- Do I have the right materials and equipment I need to do my work right?
- At work, do I have the opportunity to do what I do best every day?
- In the last seven days, have I received recognition or praise for doing good work?
- Is there someone at work who encourages my development? (p.48)

They go on to claim that great managers have four over-riding activities that they must be able to do well; select the appropriate person to work with, set expectations, motivate the person, and develop the person. The key to this line of thought is the one on one contact and level of caring
that the manager gives each individual employee. Deriving the overall feel from the staff’s input these are areas that they can and would develop their skills.

In Leadership on the Line Heifetz and Linsky (2002) state: “Without learning new ways of changing attitudes, values, and behaviors, people cannot make the adaptive leap necessary to thrive in the new environment. The sustainability of the change depends on having the people with the problem internalize the change itself” (p.13).

In Leading Change, O’Toole (1995 p.75) describes hundreds of reasons that change fails as explained by hundreds of authors over the years. In his book, O’Toole (p. 182) seeks workable answers for the change practitioner as to why people resist change. He indicates that the first source of resistance is the organizational culture itself, the second source of resistance is the values of Western society.

Organizational culture is not derived from only rules but rather from a collective knowing of past practices, normal functions, rewards, and collective memory. In other words, staff may resist change because of their success in the current system, comfort with the current system, habits, and their ability to remember the pain that was suffered from past change failure and subsequent change aversion.

In Leadership in Organizations, Gary Yukl (2002 p.274) discusses reasons for resistance to change:

1. Lack of trust.
2. Belief that change is unnecessary.
3. Belief that the change is not feasible.
4. Economic threats.
5. Relative high cost to individual.
6. Fear of personal failure.
7. Loss of status and power.
8. Threat to values and ideals.
9. Resentment of interference.

In order to accommodate those styles and behaviors that the staff itself feels will help to involve them in the change process in creating a higher level of morale and motivation for employees, these are obstacles that will have to be addressed in an honest and frank way by the staff members themselves to start or maintain any positive change towards that end.

One basic skill that the staff seems to already employ on a limited basis is coaching. The expansion and formalization of this skill would be a beneficial practice for the department. Flaherty (1999 p. 4) purposes that the products of, and therefore the definition of coaching are long term excellent performance, the ability to self correct, and improved ability to self improve.

Procedures

This report is the result of information procured using descriptive research techniques including interviews with leadership experts and questionnaires of line employees and staff members.

Questionnaires

One hundred fourteen, double questionnaires were delivered to all seven firehouses in Sioux City on May 5th, 2005 with instructions for proper completion. One hundred fourteen is the total number of firefighters on the department but does not represent the total number of firefighters and officers working the line in a full three shift rotation due to injuries, vacation, and other reasons for absences. On the three days the questionnaires were distributed there where thirty people working the line on first shift, twenty nine working second shift, and twenty nine working
third shift for a total of eighty eight line employees working those days. The sample population was the result of those line employees who were working on one of those three shifts on the three days the questionnaire was available or 77% of the total population of active line employees. A copy of the two questionnaires are found in Appendix A-1 and B-1. The questionnaires where picked up three days later so that each shift had the opportunity to participate at every firehouse. Forty of those questionnaires delivered where completed by on-duty personnel within the three day period or 45% of the total population available.

The questionnaires delivered included The Leadership Motivation Inventory (Appendix A-1 and A-2) based on Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs and Maister’s Nine Factors Questionnaire (Appendix B-1). Both questionnaires where attached together with instructions for each included. A cover letter (Appendix A-1) was included to explain the purpose of the questionnaire, that being for a research paper for the National Fire Academy and possible submission to staff for consideration. The cover letter asked the fire officers at each firehouse to explain the questionnaire and make firefighters aware it was not a mandatory duty to complete the form. These questionnaires assisted in answering research questions one, three, and assisted in the creation of a staff officers questionnaire for question four as listed below.

1. What leadership techniques and skills will lead to increased morale and motivation of employees?

3. What techniques and skills do line offices and firefighters say would positively impact their morale and motivation?

4. What techniques and skills do staff officers say would work to get them involved with improving morale and motivation of employees?
Procedures for Tabulating Results

Questionnaire one, The Leadership Motivation Inventory, was tabulated by first breaking the thirty questions into the five separate categories of need according to Maslow’s Hierarchy. Total number of top ten motivator selections or hits was then tabulated for each question and each category. The total amount of number one ranked motivators was factored for each question and for each of the five needs. A count of the total number of top ten ranked motivators per question was made and transferred to each of the five needs categories. Totals and averages for each question were then tabulated for the indication of how department members felt SCFD satisfied those needs for the top ten motivators.

The Maister results were tabulated using an excel spreadsheet by Think-Tank Business Development Company. Each participant’s answers were entered in to the spreadsheet and averages for every question were then tabulated. With these averages for every question the spreadsheet program was able to determine total average scores for each of the nine factors.

Limitations of the Questionnaires

- Not all line personnel could participate during three days.
- Not everyone who could participate did.
- An event may have occurred department wide or personally for any line employee that could have changed the result of their answers positively or negatively on any given day during the survey.
- Some people participating may have misunderstood the questions or the directions.
- There is the potential that some employees exaggerated their answers to skew the results.
After the questionnaires were collected they were analyzed for the following and the results were placed into spreadsheets, attached as Appendices A-3 and B-2. The items measured can be found below and in Appendix A-2.

Leadership Motivation Inventory:

- Number of participants placing a question in the top ten list of their motivators.
- Number of participants ranking a question as their number one motivator.
- Of the ten most selected motivators, each was ranked in numerical order to signify the composite list of those top ten motivators as ranked by the participants.
- The average satisfaction score was tabulated for every question.
- All of the statistics listed above were then placed and ranked by category in Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs to indicate at which levels needs were being met and were they were not.
- The questions were then assigned as either management factors or non management factors based on whether management held any impact over the results of the question.

Maister’s Nine Factors Questionnaire:

- Average scores were tabulated for every question.
- Average scores were then plugged into the appropriate nine factors categories to indicate how well the department does in each area.
- The SCFD average scores were then compared to average scores worldwide for organizations in all industries.
- The Nine Factors then allowed data to be pulled by management factor and non management factors to determine where staff officers had influence over the results of the data.
Interviews with Leadership Experts

The researcher contacted three sources considered to be leadership experts based on their experience, occupation, and knowledge of the subject matter including Mr. Chuck Burkell, Director of the National Fire Academies Executive Fire Officer Program, Mr. Allen Scheffer of Management Associates, a leadership consulting firm located in Sioux City Iowa and Mrs. Tracy Everett, a Senior Solutions Consultant for Think-Tank Business Development, a training, coaching, and consulting firm in Sioux City. These experts were asked to review a brief history of the problem and the findings of the research and submit or provide information and recommendations. The limitations of the expert interviews were that they had limited information regarding the specifics of the department and the research.

Staff Questionnaire Interviews

An oral questionnaire was given to 6 of 7 assistant chiefs and division chiefs making the chief’s staff during the week of June 6th, 2005. The questionnaire was given in an interview format. Each member was asked the same questions and results were written by hand prior to being transferred to this document. The results were compared and similarities and differences noted.

The limitations of the questionnaires were:

- Being an interview style questionnaire, individual staff officers may not have said exactly what they felt in the presence of the interviewer.
- The questions may not have been interpreted as intended.
- The person being interviewed may have had a personal or job related matter that skewed their answers positively or negatively that day or recently.
The person being questioned may not have thought of some answers they may have otherwise believed at the time the survey was administered.

The staff questionnaire is found in Appendix C.

Definition of Terms

Staff: A group of employees especially in administrative jobs. On the SCFD the staff is the management team including three shift commanders, one training officer, one fire marshal, one administrative assistant chief in charge of emergency medical services and hazardous materials, and one assistant chief in charge of the urban search and rescue team. An organizational chart is shown in Appendix H.

Line: Occupation. The line on SCFD are those individuals not included in the management team. All firefighters and front line supervisors such as the lieutenants and captains manning emergency apparatus during shift work are considered line employees.

Siouxland: Is a tri-state area consisting of Northeast Nebraska, Southeast South Dakota, and Northwest Iowa of which Sioux City is the major economic and population base.

Shifts: Daily period of labor. SCFD works a three shift rotation. Each shift works 24 hours from 8 A.M. to 8 A.M. and then has 48 hours off. These shifts are denoted as first shift, second shift, and third shift.

Union: Labor group organized for mutual aid. SCFD line employees are members of Local 7 of the International Association of Firefighters.

Results

Results of Questionnaires in Narrative Form with Comprehensive Analysis of Data

Two questionnaires were conducted to assess various aspects of motivation on SCFD. The first questionnaire is based on Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs Model, called the Leadership
Morale and Motivation Inventory. This questionnaire measured those items or issues that most motivated the members of the SCFD. This questionnaire also measured the level at which the department members felt SCFD satisfied those needs. The information from this questionnaire allowed this researcher to derive at which level of the Hierarchy Model SCFD members have motivation needs and where they are and are not being met.

Of the thirty questions this researcher measured the total number of top ten motivator selections or hits per question, the total number of number one rankings a question received for top motivator, the number of top ten hits per question, and the combined average scores for each question both as a motivator and a ranking for how the need is being met by the SCFD.

Appendix A-3 shows that the most hits for top ten motivator, the most number ones, and the highest top ten numbers were all in the Safety category. Interestingly, both Physiological and Safety needs were both provided for on the department indicating that while these are highly ranked as motivators they are satisfied. Indicated several times on the questionnaires was a handwritten note that stated Local Seven, the firefighters union, and not SCFD provided for these needs. Every area that pertained to the union contract was ranked as a satisfied need and a high motivator which explains the overall satisfaction with the job itself. This is not the case for the next level in the Hierarchy, Belonging. Belonging had seventy-seven hits, two number ones, three top tens, and only ranked a 2.62, or Very Little to Some, meaning this is an area of need that is not being met on the department. The next level, Self Esteem received seventy-eight top ten motivator hits, three number one rankings, three top ten rankings, and a satisfaction score of 3.18 or Some to Well. The top level of the hierarchy, self actualization received thirty-one hits for top ten ranking, one number one ranking and a satisfaction score of 3.1, indicating members ranked this as Some for how the department met this need.
The questionnaire is further broken down into management and non-management related factors based on the degree to which management can influence. Those questions that were considered management factors ranked an average 2.81, or Very Little to Some for satisfaction. Those questions considered non-management influenced factors ranked an average of 4.21, or Well to Excellent for satisfaction. Of management factor questions that ranked in the top ten motivators on the department, questions 11, 13, 18, and 19 ranked an average score of 2.35 which indicates that members felt these top motivators were not being satisfied by management. The ten lowest ranking questions of the thirty questions were all management related factors. Questions 11, 13, 18, and 19 were as follows:

- 11. Fairness of discipline and opportunity.
  Safety Need
- 13. Ability to have input heard.
  Belonging Need
- 18. Being kept informed with what is happening in the organization.
  Belonging Need
- 19. Dignity, support, and positive relations at and between all levels.
  Belonging Need

Maslow’s Hierarchy indicates that:

- Employee motivation is governed by both physical and psychological needs.
- An employee’s behavior can be described as an effort to fulfill unsatisfied needs.
- Once an employee is reasonably satisfied, that need no longer motivates and another need takes its place.
- Satisfied needs are poor motivators of performance.
Job related needs ranked interesting, challenging work and appreciation ahead of good wages or benefits. Managers, in contrast, list wages as the number one motivator for employees.

These indications show that the results of the questionnaire offer the following information:

- Physiological and Safety needs, while important to members of SCFD are basically met and no longer can be considered strong motivators according to Maslow’s indications.
- Belonging is an area that the management or staff level of SCFD have a great opportunity to provide for the needs of the line members. As indicated in questions 11, 13, 18, and 19, better communication, leadership, and relations are three basic areas that this level needs to focus on improving if they hope to improve motivation on SCFD so that members may move to higher levels of self development and motivational factors such as Self Esteem and Self Actualization.
- If management can provide for these areas of need in the Belonging area members will look to higher levels of need on the hierarchy. At these levels the department as a whole will realize greater self development, self awareness, emotional intelligence, and leadership as normal parts of the process of motivating oneself by members of SCFD. These two highest levels both allow for more self motivation and rely increasingly less on outside factors to have needs met.

The second questionnaire is based on David Maister’s (2003) Nine Factor Model, Survey, and Study. The Nine Factors are as follows:

- Quality and Client Relationships
- Training and Development
- Coaching
Morale and Motivation

- Commitment, Enthusiasm, and Respect
- High Standards
- Long Term Orientation
- Empowerment
- Fair Compensation
- Employee Satisfaction

Maister (2003) shows throughout his book that his empirical evidence from this worldwide study can predict success of organizations in relation to their scores on these Nine Factors. The questionnaire included seventy-four questions related to these nine areas. These questions are provided to employees to rank on a scale of 1 to 6 indicating:

- 1: Strongly Disagree
- 2: Disagree
- 3: Somewhat Disagree
- 4: Somewhat Agree
- 5: Agree
- 6: Strongly Agree

Maister states (2003, p.32) that an organization raising their score on a particular area has a measured effect on performance of an organization. The overall effect of the rise in performance depends on which factor is raised by how much, and how it influences other factors.

This questionnaire was used to determine areas that the department both does well, and does not do well. The results had a strong correlation to motivation issues faced by the department and both indicated similar information and reinforced other data collected. Below is a list of
average scores for SCFD followed by a list of average scores of all participating organizations in Maister’s survey.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Factor</th>
<th>SCFD</th>
<th>Average</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Quality and Client Relationships</td>
<td>4.43</td>
<td>4.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Training and Development</td>
<td>3.47</td>
<td>3.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coaching</td>
<td>3.9</td>
<td>4.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Commitment, Enthusiasm, Respect</td>
<td>3.11</td>
<td>3.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High Standards</td>
<td>3.8</td>
<td>4.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Long term Orientation</td>
<td>3.3</td>
<td>4.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Empowerment</td>
<td>3.9</td>
<td>4.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fair Compensation</td>
<td>4.1</td>
<td>3.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employee Satisfaction</td>
<td>4.7</td>
<td>4.2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This list reveals that SCFD is above average in both Fair Compensation and Employee Satisfaction. It indicated a ranking very similar to worldwide averages in Quality and Client Relationships, Training and Development, Coaching, and High Standards. It also shows that there are three areas that SCFD is scoring below average including Commitment, Enthusiasm, and Respect, Long Term Orientation, and Empowerment. Each of these three factors is a management related factor showing that the staff officers again have a great opportunity to increase performance by shoring up these areas. Specifically, according to Maister (2003, p.79), if these areas could be improved by one ranking point on the scale of one to six the following resulting changes in performance would occur:

- Commitment, Enthusiasm, and Respect: between 30% to 45% increase
- Long Term Orientation: between 22% to 45% increase
Empowerment: average of 25% increase

These percentage increases are causal meaning that if you increased all three areas an organization would not realize all three percentage increases but would rather see an increase based on the causal model found in Appendix B-3. The important part of the causal model is that changes in each of the nine areas causes, these changes in performance. It does not allow or set the stage for, but rather causes these changes. The areas that the department was weakest in are support factors that must be in place in order to derive better performance as the model shows.

Of the fourteen significant negative questions in the Maister questionnaire, those which were answered in a manner indicating employees felt the ranking was an entire point lower than the worldwide average, eleven were management factors, six involved people skills such as communication and five involved trust, respect, commitment, loyalty issues, indicating leadership style and motivation problems.

The results of these two questionnaires combined show what motivates members of SCFD. What needs are being met and which are not. It shows the areas of need that will most impact performance of the members and the department and indicates a strong need for improvement in communication skills, leadership skills, and overall people skills at the staff level in order to effect change in these areas. The questionnaires indicated that overall, members of the department are satisfied with their jobs. The lower level needs which are ranked as significantly important are being met by union contracts and city rules and regulations which means they no longer motivate performance. Higher order needs are those areas in which management can most effect and those areas are the lowest ranking scores consistently across both questionnaires.
The results of the data from the two line employee questionnaires were consistent with each other and the Management Associates survey. In general, line employees are satisfied with all areas pertaining to those items negotiated in the union contract such as pay, benefits, work conditions, schedule, and training on technical topics for job proficiency. The areas of dissatisfaction were those areas dealing with management at the staff level such as: communication, relationships, trust, respect, personal development, quality, coaching, high standards, long-term orientation, and empowerment. All areas of dissatisfaction were those that staff officers have influence over. The results back the indications from the Management Associates diversity study that was the impetus of this research. It indicates that there is a lack of leadership skills and techniques being employed by SCFD staff officers and that this is leading to poor morale and motivation leading to decreased productivity from the human capital of the department.

Relation to Original Research Questions

These questionnaires clearly answer the research questions 1 and 4 that state:
1. What leadership and management techniques and skills will lead to increased morale and motivation of employees?
4. What techniques and skills do line officers and firefighters say would positively impact their moral and motivation?

Better communication, listening, allowance for input, being treated with respect and dignity, and the development of staff officers people and leadership skills are those items that will have the most impact department wide.

Questionnaire two, Maister’s Nine Factors, answers clearly research question 2 which states:
2. What have other organizations found to be effective leadership and management techniques and skills that will raise moral and motivation of employees?

Maister’s Nine Factor study shows exactly those issues that need to be in place for high performance and scores that must be had to cause certain performance levels as indicated above.

Staff Questionnaire Results

Question 1: Please list specific leadership actions and behaviors that you believe de-motivate people on this department.

Answers:

- Micromanagement.
- Lack of feedback.
- Rumors.
- Lack of recognition.
- Not delegating or not giving necessary authority when it is done.
- Dissatisfaction with staff decisions due to lack of understanding.
- Perceived lack of value of opinions and thoughts.
- Lack of continuity of communication.
- Don’t get to do enough of what they love (firefighting). Possibly hard to keep busy enough doing important or perceived important work.
- Never enough money in the budget to get the resources needed.
- Promotional process perceptions.

Question 2: Please list specific leadership actions and behaviors that you believe do or could be used to motivate people on the department.

- Challenging people’s abilities with healthy competition.
• Creating an identity for each firehouse.
• Recognize people both individually and publicly.
• Respect and honesty at all levels in the organization.
• The love of the job is the main motivator.
• Create more and better opportunities to develop personally and professionally.
• Better leadership.
• Communicate more effectively and efficiently.
• Create more opportunities for involvement.
• Utilize, or explain why they can’t be used, ideas in a timely manner.

Question 3: Please identify what you believe to be the staff’s level of responsibility for the current state of motivation on SCFD. (1. None, 2. very little, 3. some, 4. mostly ours, 5. all ours.)

• All scores were a 3 or 4 with an average score being 3.5.
• Comments: Shared responsibility. Staff has to initiate it.

Question 4: Please identify what you believe to be the current state of motivation department-wide. (1. poor, 2. fair, 3. average, 4. good, 5. excellent.)

• All scores were a 3 or 4 with an average score being 3.5.
• Comments: Fluctuates depending on current circumstances.

After a discussion with each staff officer on the results of the two questionnaires given to line employees the following questions were asked.

What would need to occur to improve these scores?

• The line and staff must get together and discuss results and expectations.
• Communication must be improved.
• We must start to recognize people and allow them to have input and use their skills.
• Leadership must be improved at all levels.

What will you do personally to improve these scores on specific, low scoring question?

• More personal time with the line. Going to all firehouses on a regular basis to cook.
• Continue to improve the new newsletter and use it as a tool for communication and recognition.
• Delegate and challenge employees.
• Look for ways to involve employees in decision making and explain results.

What needs to happen for this change to occur?

• A meeting between staff and the line is the first step.
• Each staff officer needs to stick to his personal plan to improve interpersonal and leadership skills that he presented to the chief.
• Be nice.
• Communicate better starting now.

Leadership Expert Interview / Questionnaire Results

On July 7th, 2005 this researcher interviewed Mr. Allen Scheffer, a Senior Consultant with Management Associates of Sioux City Iowa. After explaining the results of the questionnaires and the research Mr. Scheffer had two recommendations that he had based on his vast experience with all types of organizations including governmental. Mr. Scheffer explained that there were really two main recommendations, those being to improve communication and improve involvement on the department. He explained that the organization had the skills and abilities to figure out how to do this but that they had to come together and figure out how best to do it. This researcher asked Mr. Scheffer about how recognition might be employed to assist with the
low levels of motivation. He responded by saying that recognition is an “above the line” skill, meaning it was a physical thing that we do and that it is not a motivator unless the corresponding “below the line” skill was employed which is true appreciation. He stated that a fellow consultant often times states that if you don’t like people then stop being a leader because you are not and never will be effective. This implies that leaders must see the value in the individual in order for higher level development and motivation can occur. He stated that while true appreciation will help, it is through involvement that people feel truly recognized. In other words if we tell someone we appreciate their efforts it is not as effective as showing them that we have trust in their abilities to the point that we are willing to listen to them and involve them in the issues facing the department.

Mr. Scheffer then went on to describe a common mental model found in many para-military organizations such as ours that must be challenged. He calls it KITA management or Kick In The Ass management. This old style, Theory X management creates feelings of low worth and low dignity and does not create any of the higher order motivators that SCFD requires. The reason it is still employed is that it is easy to use and that, short-term, it works. It does not work to motivate or create any kind of long-term organizational or leadership commitment. KITA could be greatly reduced or removed from our management practices with the adoption and use of better communication and involvement.

This researcher interviewed Tracy Everett, a Senior Solutions Consultant and Partner with Think-Tank Business Development, a training, coaching, and consulting business in Sioux City Iowa on July 8th, 2005. Mrs. Everett was briefed on the results of the research and asked for her opinion on how best to go about creating a change in the organization. She stated that creating and implementing a plan that included comprehensive soft-skills, or people skills training would
benefit in several ways including improving understanding, skills, development, and be a motivator itself. She also felt that a better understanding of the power of recognition would greatly benefit the department. She stated that the chief would have to use recognition as a performance indicator in order to anchor it in the organization but once done would greatly enhance attitudes in general. Another area that she believed would help with development and motivation was to implement a formal coaching program. This program makes people feel appreciated, valued, and develops their skills so that they can perform at higher levels and improve their confidence and self esteem ultimately leading to better employees.

Mrs. Everett spoke for some time about the power and worth of strong values, vision, and purpose as keystone to motivation and energy in an organization. While many organizations have these items it is rare to find them utilized as they can and should be. It is important to have maximum input in this process and to work diligently to incorporate them into the everyday lifestyle of each member of the department. This is best accomplished by changing performance measures to reflect the new emphasis, communicating the information relentlessly, communicating on a personal level, and holding people in the organization accountable for these items being lived and coached.

Mr. Chuck Burkell of the National Fire Academy suggested that management is not leading if there is a moral or motivation problem. He indicated through his email on July 14th, 2005 that people often refer to leadership as a person or a position where in reality it is a behavior. Mr. Burkell suggested that the results of an instrument to assess the organizational climate is the place to begin. Once a set of organizational indicators is selected the department would need to identify what managerial or leadership practices will enable the accomplishment of these indicators on a consistent basis throughout the organization. It is then critical to have the
Managers model the desired behavior. According to Mr. Burkell it is critical that the managers or staff offices of the department model the behavior deemed to be that which will create the cultural changes the department seeks as indicated by the Leadership Motivation and Maister’s Nine Factors.

Discussion / Implications

The results of this research were consistent with the information garnered from the Management Associates Diversity survey and are what can be expected considering the lack of leadership excellence as defined by the authors in the literature review. The literature review was consistent in pointing out the areas in which SCFD needs to change. When those areas in which change is necessary are made, the department will realize the higher levels of morale and motivation leading to improved performance that they seek.

While soft skills are sometimes considered hard to measure, my interpretation of the results of this research is that there are clear areas of need that can be addressed successfully if the staff of SCFD desires to make those changes. By improving leadership and people skills, communication, and understanding, the department will benefit measurably.

The implications of this research are that, while doing their jobs as managers, the staff is failing to take full advantage of the human capital available to them in pursuit of their goals. In this case, no change does not equal no change. It will equal poorer performance and greater problems in several key areas in the future. All of this while a positive change can greatly increase not only performance, but job satisfaction and enjoyment for employees, and the level of professional service that customers receive.

The four highest ranking motivators from the Leadership Motivation Inventory questionnaire that had the lowest satisfaction rating were:
• 11. Fairness of discipline and opportunity.
• 13. Ability to have input heard.
• 18. Being kept informed with what is happening in the organization.
• 19. Dignity, support, and positive relations at and between all levels.

The three lowest scoring areas on Maister’s Nine Factors questionnaire were:

• Commitment, Enthusiasm, and Respect
• Long-Term Orientation
• Empowerment

The results of the questionnaires show very clear areas of concern including lack of direction in the form of vision, poor communication practices and skills, poor perception of development opportunity and action, and low levels of positive reinforcement. These findings and the correlating areas of concern show low levels of trust, respect, dignity, and fairness as the result of the styles of leadership employed. With this combination of factors motivation and morale are certainly low and effecting production. The questionnaires show that there is not a lack of competence or ability, but rather a lack of commitment. Blanchard, Fowler, and Hawkins (2005 p.79) believe that when competence is low, you need direction, when commitment is low you need support and as competence rises the less direction you need, the leader shifts into a coaching role. As commitment rises an employee becomes self motivated, understanding the importance of their task and therefore needs less support.

Vision is a key first step. It is this vision that allows people to feel they have worthwhile work. Blanchard and Stoner (2004, p.39) purpose that part of a great vision is the sense of purpose it instills. Purpose is the organizations reason for existence. Great organizations have a deep and noble sense of purpose, a significant purpose that inspires excitement and commitment.
The words themselves are not as important as there meaning to the people. Collins (2001) states: “The good to great companies did not say, okay folks, let’s get passionate about what we do. Sensibly, they went the other way entirely and stated we should only do those things that we are passionate about” (p.109). SCFD must find the passion in its people to ignite a vision that inspires great purpose and meaning at the individual level that will satisfy motivational needs at the higher levels.

David Maister (2003) reports throughout his writing that morale is tied to performance and that it is the job of management to provide the environment for this to occur. Whetton & Cameron (2005, p.300) explain by chart that performance is the product of ability multiplied by motivation, ability is the product of aptitude multiplied by training, and resources, and motivation is the product of desire and commitment. In a search for the definition of leadership in business periodicals and books, over 130 definitions and theories were found. Possibly the most intriguing was that the word leader could be replaced with the word educator. This makes a case for a learning organization. In a learning organization there is a balance between results and people concerns, inspirational vision with action, excellent communication at and between all levels, development of emotional intelligence, leadership skills, job knowledge, and positive feedback methods used for developing trust and motivation. Maister’s study also shows that high levels of quality and client relationships cannot be attained without all of the other factors scoring high.

A balance of concern for people and results is the most effective blend of management and leadership skills and abilities. The concern for results allows for control and coordination of areas of high concern in the areas of production. High quality production creates improved morale and spirit. It allows for positive reinforcement. The demand for high performance is not
softened by soft skills, instead it is immeasurably enhanced by it. The concern for people allows trust to be developed by improved communications, development, and motivation. Buckingham and Coffman (1999) state:

If defining outcomes rather than methods is so elegant and so efficient why don’t more managers do just that? When faced with the challenge of turning talent into performance, why do so many managers choose instead to dictate how the work should be done? Every manager has his own reasons, but in the end it is probably that allure of control is just too tempting. On the surface the temptations seem justifiable, but play them out, and each one soon saps the life out of the company and shrivels its value. (p.112)

If the balance between people concern and results concern is imperative and defining outcomes is a good way to develop and motivate line personnel it needs to happen on SCFD. A strong understanding of self, power, motivation, and trust is imperative for the staff to develop. Blanchard and Miller (2001, p. 81) purpose that one of the five secrets to great leadership is valuing both results and relationships. Both are critical to long term survival. Some leaders believe you have to choose between the two. In reality, getting results will be nearly impossible without followers.

Goodson and Sneed (1999) state that one of the keys to effective leadership is to: “make other people feel strong and help them feel that they can influence their future and their environment” (p.65). It is this concern for people and their development that will allow for sustained results where as management of results alone may produce short-term results it does not provide for long term results and high performance realized only by allowing people to bring their brains to work and use them. Line personnel of the SCFD need development opportunities, support,
positive reinforcement, and leadership skills among themselves and in the staff ranks to develop this sustained level of energy and professionalism known as high performance.

If leadership can be defined as having integrity and vision then Senge (1990, p.206) is correct that people want to be involved in something larger than themselves. People seek worthwhile work and the ability to be in control of achieving goals. Having these basics in place allows for people and teams to cheer each other on and to create high expectations among themselves and other team-members. This means that having an inspirational vision, talking about it, getting people to personalize it, and coach it would be a necessary first step in creating higher levels of motivation and morale. Along the same line Tichy (2002, p.163) believes that the possibility of achieving a goal is the very ingredient that generates the energy required to achieve that goal and to tackle new ones. This again reinforces the theory that without vision there is no action other than the sustainment of the activities that most demand your time as a leader. Without vision and concern for people SCFD has a short-term thinking process that is limited in providing for higher level motivational needs.

SCFD must develop the attitude of continuous development is best for all involved. In terms of development the department must consider emotional intelligence, leadership skills, and job related skills to provide for well rounded employees, understanding of self and others, and the ability to provide for high level needs through empowerment and delegation. Bossidy and Charan (2002, p.74) suggest that coaching is the single most important ingredient in developing others. Along with coaching they identify setting clear goals, follow through, reward the doers, and knowing yourself as key to leadership that creates an execution culture. This required development is what Senge (1990, p.288) believes creates a learning organization. It is the process of developing people to the point in which they can not only work but think as well
where the full benefit of each individual will be realized. Further, Noe, Hollenbeck, et al (1997, p.227) suggest that the empowerment process is one of directed autonomy where employees are given an overall direction yet considerable freedom in deciding how they go about following that direction. In order for this level of trust to be developed people must be coached to higher and higher levels of self discipline, commitment, responsibility, and skill. This level of involvement and discretion is both healthy and motivating when done in concert with a consistent development system such as can be found with one on one meetings between a supervisor and an employee on a regular basis, and a system such as situational leadership.

Flaherty (1999, p. 3) writes that when we utilize coaching we can realize more competent people, more satisfied people, and people who can contribute and find real meaning in their work lives. If this is the case then the worthwhile work, control of achieving goals, and feedback that are central to and necessary for motivation could be greatly assisted with a well run coaching program. Marquart (1999) states that a leader must be an: “Instructor, coach, mentor. Helping others learn and develop” (p.110).

This research does not indicate or suggest that it is the sole responsibility of staff officers to make change or to realize higher levels of morale and motivation. Motivation and morale are a two way street. Staff, similar to management at other organizations, can only do their part in creating the proper environment for motivation to occur and be realized. It is then the responsibility of the line employees to have enough emotional intelligence and willingness to change themselves that will allow for a successful transformation. Lundin, Paul, and Christensen (2000, p. 37) know that we all have a choice regarding our attitude at work. While worthwhile work and autonomy are powerful motivators it is also up to employees to have the right attitude
at and about work. They must realize the grass is not always greener and that they can make a difference if they choose.

Recommendations

The following recommendations have been formulated based on the findings from the questionnaires, the interviews with leadership experts, information derived from the literature review, and my experience as a three year professor of the topics discussed, a masters degree in leadership, and as a partner of a training, coaching and consulting firm that is employed for creating high performance organizations in a variety of industries.

The research proved that the theory behind the problem statement was correct. There is a morale and motivation problem leading to lower than expected productivity due to the leadership employed by the staff officers. This being the case, the recommendations must address the problem of what the staff officers must do in terms of leadership techniques and style that will lead to higher levels of morale and motivation so that productivity may increase. The staff officers will need to lead a change in the organizational culture that has flourished for over a century and will be challenged to create the environment necessary for the line employees to create results.

It is necessary that all employees of the SCFD realize that the staff officers can only create that environment and that it is then up to the individual and the line officer to see that the environment is utilized for the purpose of changing attitudes and production on an individual basis.

The results of the research indicated that the department did not have a long term vision that inspired motivation, that communication was poor in several key areas related to development,
trust, integrity, commitment, and enthusiasm, that development was lacking in the area of 
leadership and teamwork, and that accountability is lacking throughout the department.

**Recommendations**

1. Create a compelling vision, purpose, and values with maximum input. Make this vision 
   part of performance measures.

2. Create a formal communication system that insures the flow of communication 
   throughout the organization and between levels is strong. Part of this system is the
   adoption of personal interviews or one on ones with the purpose of developing,
   motivating, and executing toward goal.

3. Create a system of soft, or people skill classes that are mandatory for each level of the 
   organization.

4. Create accountability for the change results by incorporating them into the performance 
   measures monthly.

5. Adopt and utilize standard leadership and teamwork systems.

**Recommendation Explanations**

  should address basic assumptions about what is important for the organization, 
  how it should relate to the environment, and how people should be treated. Create 
  a vision that is both possible and inspiring for those involved. The vision must 
  then be consistently communicated and lived by the people of the department. 
  Conversations are required to make each employee understand how this vision 
  impacts them and their role on the department. In order for the vision to mean 
  anything it must be clear and understood, identified with on a personal level for
all members of the SCFD, it must be lived, and it must be coached by all members of the department. Along with the vision a strong set of values will be the “how” when determining how the department will behave in pursuit of the vision. All members of the department need to be held accountable for behaving in accordance to the values and in a manner consistent with the pursuit of the vision.

- **Communication, Input, Trust, Leadership, Accountability.** A communication system must be set up to enhance development and motivation at all levels. Whetten and Cameron (2005, p.223) describe a personal management interview system that is regular and one on one. In a study of organizations who faithfully utilize these systems to develop people it was found that productivity and results increased significantly.

This system should include regular one on ones at every level of the organization. Sample forms for these meetings can be found in Appendix 6. The purpose of these meetings is to set goals, communicate needs, provide feedback on performance, and to coach and redirect behavior when necessary. Examples include a fire officer meeting with each one of her firefighters bi-weekly, a staff officer meeting with each one of his officers monthly, and the fire chief meeting with each staff officer monthly. The system should also include meetings at each level of the organization such as one for firefighters, one for officers, one for captains and staff, and staff officers. A customer service committee can meet regularly and be charged with improving internal and external customer service and recognition. The customer service committee should have direct access to the fire chief, and be made of rotating members from each firehouse. Each of these
meetings feeds the other so that all levels of the organization have input and information, thus enhancing communication, trust, respect, development, and commitment. In Maister’s Practice What You Preach (2003 p.160) chapter twenty is devoted to those skills leaders need to create high performance and motivation through better accountability, trust building, development, and coaching, all of which begins with strong communication. System example can be found in Appendix I.

- **Development of Human Capital.** All SCFD personnel should receive ongoing training in certain soft skill subjects depending on each rank in the department. The hard, bottom dollar advantages of developing people skills and emotional intelligence are so pervasive as to require organizations to pay attention and to take advantage of this resource as well as possible.

  - Firefighters should receive training on leadership, working in teams, customer service, communication and conflict, empowerment, attitude, and positive relations.
  
  - Line officers should add emotional intelligence topics such as self-awareness, understanding and appreciating individual differences, self disclosure, personal responsibility, stress, problem solving, counseling, supportive communication, power and influence, conflict, empowerment, effective teams, leading positive change, along with classes on meetings, coaching, delegation, motivation, trust, facilitation, learning, and supervision courses.
Staff officers should have all of the previously mentioned topics along with comprehensive management training. This training should be ongoing and become a regular part of the monthly training orders. Senge (1990) states: “Organizations learn only through individuals who learn. Individual leaning does not guarantee organizational learning. But without it no organizational learning occurs” (p.139). Whetten and Cameron (2005, p. 512) suggest that the skill set of the people is the foundation on which organizational success is built. No organization can be successful in the long run without well developed human capital, meaning capable and skillful employees that this type of training will develop.

**Change and Performance.** Accountability for results should include biannual surveys, reports to staff on firefighter progress toward goal, reports to the chief on line officer progress and development, reports to chief on staff development and survey results. The chief should report on results of goals, his ideas and those of others for the continuation of departmental development. All team and department initiative results should be posted and communicated regularly through a departmental newsletter. Provide a means for customer feedback on performance in the form of a survey given on scene or access to a web site with a survey for measuring external customer satisfaction. According to Whetten and Cameron (2005, p.492) organizations are designed to create stability, steadiness, and predictable conditions. These conditions try to constrain as much change as possible. Further, they believe that: “establishing a climate of positively, creating readiness for change including benchmarking, and institutionalizing the vision
including developing human capital” (p.513), are key to successful change initiatives.

- **Consistency, Fairness, Value, and Development.** Training in and use of a standard leadership development system for all officers to improve and measure competence and commitment such as The Situational Leadership Model (Figure 2) (Blanchard, Zigarmi, Zigarmi, 1985, p. 47 and 50) for consistency, continued development, learning at all levels, and ease of use and understanding. This model allows for development, motivation, and execution and focuses on moving the individual employee to an empowered state where low supportive and low directive behavior from the manager is appropriate. The system is one in which managers can classify their employees according to their level of competence and commitment and utilize the proper style of management and leadership for each with specific behaviors for how the manager interacts with this employee at any development level. It is interactive, it forces communication and thought, and it allows for individual needs to be met. Development of skills and level of commitment are enhanced while the manager executes.
Team Development. Training in and use of a standard team development system for all officers to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of teams on the department such as The Situational Team Leadership Model (Blanchard, Carew, Parisi-Carew, 2000, p.64) which should include a team charter for clear expectations, accountabilities, responsibilities, authority, roles, and goals. This model, similar to the Situational Leadership Model shown in Figure 2 allows a manager to better understand team development levels and allows for the improvement of team function. It enhances understanding of teams and how they develop into a high performance unit. Both the Situational Leadership and Team Models should have standard forms and tracking systems as are common when the systems are used to measure progress.
Benefits

Each of these recommendations alone will provide for some relief to the problem addressed in this research. Together they will provide a powerful change process to guide the department to higher performance through empowered, developed, informed, and motivated employees at all levels of the organization. The purpose of this research was to identify leadership techniques and skills that will aid the staff officers in improving the morale and motivation of the line offices and firefighters of the SCFD. Each of the recommendations above includes leadership techniques and styles that will increase:

Communication
Long Term Orientation
Accountability for Performance
Responsibility for Development of Competence and Commitment
Lifelong Learning
Awareness of Self and Others
Trust and Integrity

These skills and traits will generally improve leadership, not just at the staff level, but throughout the department. Improved communications, awareness, positive relations, and leadership will improve thus providing the results and needs we all seek from work which is to be treated with dignity, respect, and fairness.

Performance is equal to motivation plus ability where motivation is equal to desire plus commitment and ability is equal to resources plus training (Whetten & Cameron 2005 p.300). This simple formula shows that given the results of the surveys
administered, the motivation piece of the equation is missing or could be strengthened on SCFD in order to improve performance levels.

**Follow Up and Recommendations**

This researcher recommends that the Management Associates survey or one of the two questionnaires used in this research be conducted annually to see what progress has been made and if changes in the program need to be made. The accountability for the change process must be part of the personal interview system and performance measures, filed and reviewed monthly. This researcher recommends that the department begin the training with outside sources or evaluate inside sources for programming and needs and eventually utilize inside sources for training since training is among the best ways to personalize and learn a skill. Patience and small steps will be of value in creating this cultural change. SCFD has many positive things going for it. To build on those and build a high performance culture that creates the environment for a motivated workforce will be the key to unlocking the potential of the department and it’s human resources for successful service long into the future.
Reference


