

The Fire Service's Internal Customer

Executive Development

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ABSTRACT

Fire department employees are customers too! The problem is that customer service is a term often heard around fire departments but it is often forgotten that the employees are also the customers.

The Central Yavapai Fire District has long embraced customer service as a core value. It has also made every effort to ensure that its employees are taken care of. The department now wants to take that care to the next step and not only make sure that the internal customers are being served but see what can be improved. The purpose of this paper is to define the relationship between the fire service organization and its internal customers, the employees.

A literature review, employee survey, and data analysis were the primary procedures utilized in the study. Action and evaluative research methodologies were employed to answer the following research questions:

1. Who are the internal customers?
2. What do the internal customers expect of their organizations?
3. What are the components of an internal customer service program?
4. What expectations should the fire service have for its internal customers?

The major findings of this research showed that every single person in an organization is an internal customer, and there is a direct relationship between how that employee is treated and how the employee will treat the external customers.

The recommendations of this research include fiscal responsibility of the organization, outside pay studies at scheduled intervals, increased frequency of personnel meetings, and scheduled time for administrative staff to ride with fire suppression personnel and spend with support divisions.

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INTRODUCTION

To put it simply: happy employees make for happy customers. Happiness is contagious. It spreads quickly. The cornerstone of the success of the Marriott hospitality organization is the motto advanced by its founder, J. Willard Marriott: “Take care of the employees and they’ll take care of the customers”. (Scheuing, 1991, p.36)

The fire service is no different! Our job is taking care of the public’s needs, or in today’s terminology, providing customer service. We generally do a pretty good job of this. There is more to providing excellent customer service, though, than taking care of the public’s needs. The problem today is that customer service is a term often heard around fire departments but we often forget that our employees are also our customers. There is an internal customer. This customer is our employee. Internal customers have needs and expectations much like our external customers.

The purpose of this research project is to define the relationship between the fire service organization and its internal customer, the employees. Ultimately, with this information one can determine the harmonious balance that is required to meet our internal customer’s needs, much like we meet the needs of our external customer.

The research method for this applied research project was a combination of the evaluative and action research methods. A survey was distributed to the author’s department as well as to three departments in the area to get feedback on expectations of fire service personnel.

The answers to the following questions were pursued:

1. Who are the internal customers?
2. What do internal customers expect of their organization?
3. What are the components of an internal customer service program?
4. What expectations should the fire service have for its internal customers?

BACKGROUND AND SIGNIFICANCE

The Central Yavapai Fire District (CYFD) is a combination department situated in the center of Arizona. It started with eight volunteers in 1964 and was located in a small garage in the city of Prescott. Its purpose was to provide fire protection to the surrounding rural areas outside of the city limits. Today CYFD has grown to a response area of 155 square miles surrounding the City of Prescott and also includes the Town of Prescott Valley. Three quarters of CYFD is still considered rural with the remaining quarter coming from the Town of Prescott Valley. The Town of Prescott Valley is made up of light industrial and commercial development as well as high and low density housing.

CYFD is currently served by five fully-manned fire stations. Two stations and three engines serve the Prescott Valley area and the remaining three stations and engines are strategically located to serve the outlying areas. There is an automatic aid agreement in effect with the City of Prescott and mutual aid agreements with two other neighboring departments. CYFD is staffed with 75 personnel with a breakdown as follows: Chief Officers—5; Suppression Personnel—57; Mechanics—4; Inspectors—2; Dispatch/Alarm Operators—9; and Office Personnel—6. The Fire District also has 31 reserve personnel.

The significance of this research has a direct relationship to the demographic changes that have occurred in the Fire District in the past 15 – 20 years. The population of the Fire District and the Fire District itself are growing at such a tremendous pace, CYFD wants to make sure that it is still meeting the needs of its employees and not leaving them behind.

In 1985 the number of full time suppression personnel doubled to 32. In the past 4-5 years the Fire District has been hiring 3-6 personnel a year. Two new fire stations have been built in the past 5 years. A committee is currently drawing up plans to expand a station that currently houses two engine companies. Another new station is planned for the Prescott Valley area in the next three years. According to a 2000 Market Profile Report, the population of the Town of Prescott Valley was 8,904 in 1990. The year 2000 census showed a population of 23,535 and within a five-mile radius of town hall a population of 31,828. The projected population in the year 2006 is 39,127 (Business Information Systems, 2000).

The Central Yavapai Fire District believes that its employees are one of its most important assets. It also believes that it is taking care of its internal customers, the employees. The administration now wants to take that care and concern to the next level to make sure that meeting the needs of the employees is also keeping up with the growth. Michael Peel said it well when he stated, “We must continue to recognize that we are all integral to the success of our organizations. If one group fails, we all fail. You cannot sink half a ship” (Peel, 2002, p. 70).

This applied research paper is clearly linked to the National Fire Academy’s Executive Leadership course. The subject matter of the internal customer is definitely part of the fire services organizational culture as contained in Unit 7: Organizational Culture (National Fire Academy [NFA], 2002, SM 7-2).

Chuck Burkell sums it up when he states:

The climate or culture of an organization is analogous to the mortar in a brick wall. It can be so incredibly strong and supportive to the reason for the wall, or near a state of failure in need of change or repair...the effective leader is one who can assess, shape, and manage this mortar—to be a social architect. (National Fire Academy [NFA], 2002, SM 7-1)

This research project is also related to the United States Fire Administrations operational objectives (United States Fire Administration [USFA], 2002, II-2). The objectives call for a reduction in fire fighter deaths from fire and comprehensive programs to serve the fire service community. Both of these objectives are addressed by the fire service taking care of its internal customers and meeting their needs. When needs are met, productivity and safety should increase by taking away negative distractions and lack of concentration.

A survey of the employees of four area fire departments was conducted to see what expectations they have of their organization. The answers from the survey are used to determine what needs are being missed or what efforts can be improved upon. The results may also show that employees feel forgotten or left out of the organization. Because the survey included three other departments in the county, this results in a broader perspective. It was anticipated that the recommendations resulting from this research would also be helpful to other fire departments that are looking to improve their internal customer service.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Who Are Our Internal Customers

“Employees’ commitment is commensurate with the degree to which they perceive they are valued as an integral part of the organization. In other words, employees are customers of the organization as a whole and should be treated with the same level of respect, care, and concern as external customers” (Wallace, 2000, p. 138).

Michael Peel states, “Many ‘customer service’ authors go to great lengths to distinguish between ‘internal’ and ‘external’ customers. Generally, you will see internal customers designated as our fire department co-workers and other jurisdictional agency staff (public works, law enforcement, etc), and everyone else as external customers” (Peel, 2002, p. 68).

Entrepreneur.com states, “Internal customer service is the service we provide fellow employees and other departments within our own organization, as well as our suppliers and anyone else with whom we work to get our jobs done” (Miller, 2002, p. 1).

The author observed from this research question that every employee in an organization is an internal customer regardless of rank, position, or job duties.

Employees Are Important

“All the great management analysts agree that employees are any organization’s key asset in this age of leaner, more flexible, and more dynamic organizations” (Van Wart, 1998, p. 276).

In the past, employees were generally given a task and expected to act upon it until completion. There was little employee input into the general day-to-day operations of the organization.

According to Van Wart:

Even the recently popular reengineering gurus Michael Hammer and James Champy, originally keen on cutting processes without much real thought given to the people in those processes, later adjusted their messages substantially when they realized that without concern for the exceedingly important organizational asset of human capital, radical change cannot be successfully engineered, even by the most strong willed and brilliant organizational leaders equipped with good change maps. (Van Wart, 1998, p. 276)

Van Wart further states:

The great management experts generally agree that the new types of organizations emerging—no matter whether in the private or public sectors, in the United States or abroad—require a whole new perspective on investment in employees as assets and an appreciation of the fact that employees form the core of a successful enterprise. (Van Wart, 1998, p.276)

Fire Chief Alan Brunacini may be considered the expert of fire department customer service. Brunacini states, “It currently takes a big inventory of stuff and a bunch of various characters to provide the support required to effectively deliver service to our customers. Throughout the organization there are behind-the-scene workers...” (Brunacini, 2000, p. 10)

Chief Brunacini further states:

It will always be critical for these folks to do their part because their efforts are absolutely essential for us to deliver effective service. It is also critical that bosses somehow keep them connected to the overall customer service mission so that they know

not only where they fit in but how important what they do (every day) is to Mrs. Smith (on her special kitchen fire day) when she needs us badly. (Brunacini, 2000, p. 10)

The reference book *Customer Service For Dummies* looks at the external customer as only half of the picture. It states:

The other half of the picture is the people who work inside your company and rely on you for the services, products, and information that they need to get their jobs done.

They are not traditional customers, yet they need the same tender, loving care you give to your external customers. (Leland & Bailey, 1995, p. 7)

As the above quotations indicate, an organization has to take care of its internal customer. More often than not the employees will determine the success or demise of the organization.

Internal Customer Expectations

Determining what your employee's expectations are or what their needs may be is often a difficult task. Employers have tried many methods over the years. Questionnaires, surveys, and study groups have been used but the results often sit in a closet. Nothing makes an employee feel more a part of an organization than talking one-on-one and then following through.

There is nothing like looking at another individual face-to-face and saying: "What is it that keeps you here?" A manager should take an employee aside for five minutes and say: "You matter. I notice you. You count. We depend on you. Tell me some things I can do to keep you here." Managers are afraid to ask. They're afraid the answer will be: "Double my salary." What if the answer is "I want a 20 percent raise" and the manager can't give it? Then he or she says: I would love to give you what you want salary-wise, but frankly my hands are tied right now. Tell me what else you want."

If managers could get their employees to name five what-elses, there will be one or two that they can do something about. (Grensing-Pophal, 2002, p. 144)

“Training, resources, communication and rewards are all-important requirements if our frontline members are to strive for excellence” (Rubi, 1999, part 4).

Employee attitude surveys are also a tool organizations may use to determine employee needs and expectations.

Employee attitude surveys serve three major purposes: to diagnose employee attitudes, problems, and conditions; to assess the impact or influence of organizational change; and to secure employee input. It is important to keep in mind that employee surveys supplement but do not replace other forms of employee involvement. Employee attitude surveys are diagnostic tools that focus on quality of work issues such as employee job satisfaction, work motivation, and organizational commitment and trust. (Roberts, 1998, pgs. 431-432)

It is apparent from the research that there are tools and assistance available to insure that the internal customer has a way to voice their needs and expectations of the organization. The key to the success of these evaluative tools is the follow-through of the information received by the organization in meeting the needs of the employee.

Internal Customer Service Programs

More and more fire departments are utilizing a Human Resource (HR) position in their organization. This person can be a real asset to the organization working with the internal customer.

Obviously, an HR professional devotes much time and effort to helping an organization achieve business goals. But the HR professional must also champion employee relations and serve as an employee advocate—a person who:

- Works for fair treatment of employees.
- Partners with and trains management in fairness issues.
- Tries to maintain and/or improve employee morale.
- Attempts to resolve employee problems.
- Believes employees should be treated with respect and dignity and works to that end.

(Society for Human Resource Management [SHRM], 2002, pgs. 35-36)

Another approach to internal customer service programs considers HR's role in building a motivated work force. "While HR cannot directly motivate the workforce, it can become a significant force in how the company is managed. The HR initiatives include these:

- Offering supervisory and management training workshops.
- Promulgating and implementing worker-friendly practices.
- Providing the role model for integrity and honesty."

(Grensing-Pophal, 2002, pg. 17)

The literature available for components of an internal customer service program is almost non-existent. The above stated references are definitely a start. The suggestions are practical and could be handled by a competent manager if an HR position was not available.

Expectations of Internal Customers

Looking at the organization's expectations of the internal customer is a good way to balance out the relationship between the two. Peel states it well when he says:

As noted previously, everyone was a customer of the fire department. This includes each and every member of the fire department. We do not need a rank structure to treat people with courtesy and respect. Courtesy and respect flows both ways, up and down. If everyone recognizes the value of their line force, and provides the support they need, they can and will continue to provide a high level of customer service to our citizens. If everyone recognizes the value of their command staff, good solid management practices and strong leadership will continue to receive the support needed to successfully operate. If everyone recognizes the value of their support staff, all the rest of the day-to-day stuff that make fire departments run will continue to occur. (Peel, 2002, p. 72)

This continuity between employers and employees is again demonstrated in a statement from Chief Brunacini's book on customer service. He writes:

Managers should send a clear message to department members that the organization will not accept substandard customer outcomes. Customer service must be the ultimate test of why we are doing any other department activity—if what we are doing does not relate directly or indirectly to the delivery of service, we should question why we are doing it. (Brunacini, 2000, p. 77)

Mark Wallace sums up my research on expectations for the internal customer when he states, "What we can provide is fair, consistent, courteous and respectful service. If you treat people the way you would expect to be treated under the same circumstances, you can seldom go wrong" (Wallace, 2000, p. 137).

PROCEDURES

The procedures employed in this study encompassed problem identification, problem background and significance evaluation, literature review, regional survey, data analysis, discussion, and recommendations.

Literature Review

The initial research for the project began at the National Fire Academy's Learning Resource Center (LRC) in Emmitsburg, MD. A print out of potential journals and Executive Fire Officer (EFO) papers was also sent to the author by the LRC. The local library was used to borrow LRC materials through interlibrary loan that were not available for download on the internet.

The literature review was continued in the author's hometown at the Prescott Public Library, the Central Yavapai Fire District library, the author's personal library, as well as on the World Wide Web (WWW).

The literature review targeted trade journals, magazines, and textbooks that contained information on the 'Fire Service's Internal Customer.' Applicable sources were summarized and included in the Literature Review section of this report.

Regional Survey

A survey was used to find out the employees' expectations of their fire service organization. To gain a broader prospective of the expectations, the same survey was sent to three neighboring fire departments. The Fire Chief of each department was contacted by phone to gain permission for their full-time personnel to participate in the survey. The request was to deliver the survey directly to the administrative offices of each department for all personnel to fill out with the exception of the Fire Chief. The Battalion Chief of each shift was given the

responsibility for having the surveys completed in a timely manner and sealing them in a manila envelope for pick up by the author. A cover letter was included with each survey. The survey consisted of one question: *As an employee, what expectations do you have of your organization?* Following the question were five spaces to write in five expectations.

The surveys were completely anonymous with the exception of knowing which department they came from when they were picked up by the author. In accordance with the information found in the book *The SHRM Learning System (Society for Human Resource Management [SHRM], 2002, chap. 5-4)*, the surveys were tested on a group of employees from all levels in the organization.

After being proofread for accuracy and readability, the survey was distributed to the four regional full-time fire departments. A combined total of 150 surveys were distributed to the Central Yavapai Fire District, the Chino Valley Fire District, the Mayer Fire District, and the Prescott Fire Department. Even though there was a difference in the size of the departments, two larger and two smaller, they were all surveyed. The logic for this decision was to see if there is a pattern to the expectations employees have of their organization regardless of size.

In order to increase participation, phone calls were placed to each departments contact person to check on progress. Follow-up phone calls were also made to departments who had not responded within the allotted time. These follow-up calls were helpful but still did not achieve the 100-percent response that the author was looking for.

Analysis of Data

A total of 102 surveys (68%) were returned. This number is below the 20% non-response rate of surveys as outlined in the *Executive Development Course* (National Fire Academy [NFA], 2002, SM 3-41). The data from the surveys was compiled, tabulated, and analyzed to determine

the expectations the internal customer has of their organization and determine if expectation trends were apparent within separate organizations. The data from the survey was summarized and is included in the *Results* section of this report.

Assumptions and Limitations

The procedures employed in this research project were based on five basic assumptions. First, it was assumed that all authors referenced in the literature review performed objective and unbiased research. Second, it was assumed that data obtained from the Prescott Valley Market Profile report was accurate and current. Third, it was assumed that each survey respondent answered the question fairly and objectively. Fourth, it was assumed that survey respondents did not discuss employee expectations with each other prior to completing the surveys. Fifth, it was assumed that recommendations from this research would be considered for implementation in the Central Yavapai Fire District, depending on budgetary feasibility and concerns.

One limitation of the survey was the open-ended question format. It required respondents to take more time to fill out than the traditional multiple choice check box system. The intent of the open-ended question format was to get the respondent to think about what is important to them without bias from other employees.

Another limitation of the survey is that it was done regionally rather than nationally. A survey distributed nationally may have provided additional information into employee expectations.

Time was a limiting factor because the project had a 6-month completion timeframe established by the National Fire Academy (NFA). This had a direct impact on determining whether the survey was done regionally or nationally.

Resources available were also a limitation. In 1996 when Chief Brunacini first wrote *Essentials of Fire Department Customer Service* he stated, “This lack of documentation about what seems should be a fairly major topic is curious reality for an occupation that has been intensely and continuously serving customers for the past 200 years” (Brunacini, 2000, p. 1). Though six years have elapsed since Brunacini’s book, there still remains a lack of information about a very important topic.

RESULTS

Research Question 1

Who are the internal customers?

The internal customer is every single employee of an organization. Miller (2002) reinforces this concept by stating that the internal customer is every fellow employee as well as other departments within the organization. In the fire service this means that it is not just the suppression person riding on the fire engine. It is the mechanics, the communications personnel, the fire prevention division and the office staff to name a few. Peel affirms this fact:

The point is, it really doesn’t matter. Everyone is a potential “customer” of the fire department, and all our customers should be treated the same. We should always strive to treat everyone with the respect, courtesy, and kindness they deserve. (Peel, 2002, p.68)

It is also interesting to note that the term ‘internal customer’ is a relatively new term in the business world. This was determined by the literature research and the limited amount of resources available specific to that term. This was also found to be true in talking with employees prior to doing the survey. For this reason the term ‘internal customer’ was used in the

cover letter but was changed to ‘employee’ on the actual survey form as a term that everyone would be familiar with.

It was shown through the literature research that the internal customer is every employee and department in an organization. For that reason the survey was given to all personnel within the four departments surveyed. Question 2 reflects the survey results.

Research Question 2

What do internal customers expect of their organization?

More often than not, organizations guess at what they think the employees’ expectations are or they put together study groups to find the answer. Grensing-Pophal (2002) suggests asking the employee directly. The organization is then showing concern and involving itself with the employee one-on-one. The organization is also in a place to explain why an expectation cannot be met or a comparable solution can be met.

Roberts (1998) suggests that attitude surveys are a tool that organizations may use to find out their employees needs and expectations. The author used this tool to determine the answer to Question 2.

A survey was designed by the author and distributed to four local fire departments. A copy of the survey is included in Appendix A. A cover letter was distributed with the survey and is included in Appendix B. The survey consisted of one question with room for five answers. The question was, “As an employee, what expectations do you have of your organization?”

The open-ended question left room for many answers. The author’s intent was to collect the variety of answers for future research and to utilize the most common answers as recommendations to his department. The most common answer from the survey was the expectation of a comparable wage and benefits to like organizations. Two-thirds of those

surveyed picked this as the top answer. The second most common answer at 43% was that employees expect to be treated fairly and with respect. The remaining eight expectations ranged from 30% to 15%. The ten most common answers and their percentages from the compiled surveys are illustrated in Table 1.

Table 1
Ten Most Common Expectations (n=102)

Expectation	Percent
1. Wages & benefits comparable with like organizations	66 %
2. Be treated fairly and with respect	43%
3. Up to date training and equipment to do the job	30%
4. Keep up with recommended standards for staffing and equipment	25%
5. Provide training and opportunities for career advancement	22%
6. A safe work environment	17%
7. Stable, competent, efficient leadership	17%
8. Provide opportunity & support for personal and professional development	15%
9. Job stability and security	15%
10. Financial soundness and responsibility	15%

A list of all answers by department is included in the Appendix. Central Yavapai Fire District is Appendix C, Chino Valley Fire District is Appendix D, Mayer Fire District is

Appendix E, and Prescott Fire Department is Appendix F. It is interesting to note that a comparison of Appendix C and the Table on page 19 show that the top ten answers from the author's fire department did not change with the participation of the three other fire departments.

Research Question 3

What are the components of an internal customer service program?

The author did not find a specific list of components available in his research. What the author did find was a common theme in his research that requires progressive organizations to assist their internal customers by finding out what their needs and expectations are. Wallace states "Organizations must never forget that the way they treat employees will be reflected in the way the employees treat the customers" (Wallace, 2000, p. 138).

Taking care of the employee can come in many forms. It may come in the form of empowerment to do their job better. Chief Brunacini writes "Empowerment gives our troops permission ahead of time to episodically get us into a somewhat different activity beyond our regular, core business if our temporary entry into that somewhat different business will help a customer" (Brunacini, 2000, p.69).

Rewarding excellent performance is a component of an internal customer service program. "Winning an award for exceptional performance has a great deal of meaning for employees because it publicizes their accomplishments and holds them up as examples for others" (Zemke & Woods, 1998, p. 36).

The large number of answers from the survey used for Question 2 could be developed into components for an internal customer service program. The top response was regarding wages and benefits. This would definitely need to be one of the program components.

A 2000 SHRM Retention Practices Survey, based on the responses of 473 human resource professionals, revealed that the most important tools for retention of employees were health insurance, vacation, and compensation. The pursuit of career opportunities elsewhere and better compensation and benefits packages were the two most commonly cited reasons, by HR professionals, for employee departures—and consequently the two greatest threats to employee retention. (Leland & Bailey, 1995, p. 4)

Research Question 4

What expectations should the fire service have for its internal customers?

Regardless of rank or position everyone wants to be treated fairly and this includes administration. Repeating Peel's quote, "We do not need a rank structure to treat people with courtesy and respect. Courtesy and respect flows both ways, up and down" (Peel, 2002, p. 72). Wallace echoes a similar thought regarding respect, "Treat people the way you would expect to be treated under the same circumstances" (Wallace, 2000, p. 137).

The fire service expects its employees to be professional and display a positive public image. Brunacini writes, "Our personal/organizational appearance should be part of a planned strategy to create a positive initial and ongoing customer impression and reaction" (Brunacini, 2000, p. 54).

Fire service employees are expected to be an advocate to the public. "Service delivery extends far beyond the basic skills we learn in firefighting and EMS classes. It includes becoming an advocate for the customer. It is showing compassion and being helpful to those requiring assistance, regardless of the need" (Peel, 2002, p. 68).

DISCUSSION

No similar studies were found in the literature review. The author was unable to locate any published studies that specifically look at the internal customer or internal customer programs. All of the literature reviewed had an emphasis on external customer service with a few paragraphs or a chapter looking at the internal customer. The author views this research paper as a pioneer in a topic that appears to be gaining interest in successful organizations today. This is backed up by popular reengineering experts Michael Hammer and James Champy who found that employee involvement was the key to successful organizations (Van Wart, 1998, p. 276).

There is no doubt that the internal customer is a vital part of an organization's existence and survival. Wallace reinforces this fact in a 2000 *Fire Engineering* article. Wallace writes, "Organizations must never forget that the way they treat employees will be reflected in the way the employees treat the customer" (Wallace, 2000, p. 138). The fire service is a customer service oriented profession. Everything they do is centered on providing customer service to someone who is most likely having a bad day and called for help (Brunacini, 2000, p. 12).

It is easy to see how the fire service could look at the internal customer as only the firefighter who rushes out to deliver babies and put out fires. The author agrees with Brunacini as he is quick to mention that we cannot forget those behind the scenes people who pay the bills, dispatch the calls, repair the equipment, enforce the codes, and all before the firefighter arrives on the scene (Brunacini, 2000, p. 10). Everyone in an organization has and will have a part in the success of that organization. Wellemin views the organization as a chain. By strengthening the whole chain, you offer the end user more complete support. The chain is only as strong as its weakest link. (Wellemin, 1997, p. 22)

The survey results (Table 1 & Appendix C-F) should be considered valuable to fire service organizations that desire to see the types of expectations fire service employees have and where they stand in meeting them. The open-ended survey question (Appendix A) allowed employees to voice their opinions and say what was on their minds, which was evident by some of the answers (Appendix C-F). The top answers were fairly consistent within all the departments with some variation in their order.

Many of the expectations stated on the survey are directly related to money. An expectation that any employee has of their organization is that the organization has to be financially sound and responsible. This becomes quite a balancing act between labor and management when the majority of the needs and expectations of the internal customer have a dollar value attached to them. It is worth noting that financial soundness and responsibility was #10 on the employee survey of expectations (Table 1). Just as the employee wants to be understood, it is just as important that the employee understand management and why things are done like they are (Peel, 2002, p. 72).

Having reviewed the literature research and the survey, the author is pleased with the progress his department has made keeping up with the expectations of the employees in the midst of exploding growth. The author now sees the survey results as a management tool for his department. It is not a means to an end but it will enable CYFD to evaluate what it can improve upon and continue or what has been completely missed.

RECOMMENDATIONS

As the literature review and results showed, an organization cannot forget its internal customers. The internal customer is a valuable asset to the success of an organization. It is like a marriage where the two parties have to work together to be successful. Research has shown

that if you take care of the internal customer, the internal customer will take care of the external customer. The Central Yavapai Fire District can continue to make this happen with the following recommendations based on literature review and the survey results:

1. Continue to be fiscally responsible to the citizens of the Fire District. Financial responsibility is, and always will be, a balancing act between needs and wants of the organization and giving the citizen the best possible service for the least amount of money. Most programs or initiatives you take to improve employee satisfaction will require a monetary contribution. Employees want better pay and benefits, the best training and equipment, the best schooling and increased staffing. Being able to provide this balance keeps everyone happy and provides the long-term security and job stability which employee's desire.
2. Put together a plan to have an outside consultant re-evaluate wages and benefits on a regular basis. The fire district just finished their first outside pay study two years ago. The results provided substantial raises to most employees. This still appears to be of number one importance to the employees from the survey that was done. Pick a time frame whether it is every 5 years, 7 years, or 10 years and budget to have a study done on a regular basis. This will show the employees that their concerns are being considered and will also provide data to administration for the budgeting process.
3. Increase personnel meetings to four times a year rather than twice a year. Many of the answers on the survey could be resolved or explained with improved communication. Keeping your employee up to date on the day-to-day workings of an organization shows that you value them as an employee and their input. (Providing good communication up and down the ladder just missed being one of the top ten answers on the survey.)

4. Plan scheduled times for the command staff to individually spend with line personnel and divisions. This may include riding with an engine company for the day, or spending a half-day with dispatch or maintenance personnel. The reason for this is two-fold. It allows administration to see first hand and be part of the day-to-day workings of line personnel and it allows personnel to work one on one with their leadership and gain confidence in their ability and knowledge.

A recommendation to the future readers of this Applied Research Project is to continue the research with the primary purpose of developing a list of components that would serve an internal customer service program. Another suggestion would be to look beyond the fire service to find other ways organizations have gauged employee satisfaction.

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Appendix A

Survey for Executive Development Applied Research Project

October 2002

Thank you for taking time to complete this survey. Please do not discuss the question with fellow employees in order to insure that the results are valid. When you are finished, please put the questionnaire in the manila envelope and seal it. I will pick them up the week of October 14th.

Please write down five answers to the following question:

As an employee, what expectations do you have of your organization?

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

Appendix B

Chief Officers and Firefighters
(Your Fire Department)
(Your town and state)

Dear Fellow Firefighters:

Presently I am enrolled in the National Fire Academy's Executive Fire Officer Program. As a part of my studies, I am required to do a research paper. I have chosen to research "The Fire Service's Internal Customer" which is each one of you. The purpose of my paper is to define the relationship between the fire service organization and its internal customer, their employees.

Your participation in this research will involve completing and returning the enclosed questionnaire. There will be four fire departments in the tri-city area participating in this survey. For confidentiality reasons please do not put your name or department on the survey. After all of my statistics have been compiled and analyzed, I will be happy to share the results with any of the participating departments.

In order to insure that the results are valid, please do not discuss the questionnaire with fellow firefighters. It is vital that I have information from you that has not been influenced by anyone else.

Thank you in advance for your time and participation in this study.

Sincerely,

Charles E. Cook, Fire Marshal
Central Yavapai Fire District

Appendix C

Central Yavapai Fire District Employee Expectations of Their Organization EFO Survey Answers (n=57)

1. Wages and benefits comparable to like organizations	53%
2. Be treated fairly and with respect	51%
3. Up to date training and equipment to do the job	26%
4. Job stability and security	25%
5. Provide training and opportunities for career advancement	23%
6. Financial soundness and responsibility	21%
7. Stable, competent, efficient leadership	16%
8. Provide opportunity and support for personal and professional development.	14%
9. Keep up with recommended standards for staffing and equipment	12%
10. A safe work environment	12%
11. Provide good communication up and down the ladder	
12. Stay current with new ideas and technology and be open to them	
13. A means to voice my opinion	
14. Recognition for a good job	
15. Fair, unbiased, and consistent disciplinary action	
16. Best possible services to the public	
17. Trust opinions of floor personnel with day to day operational activities	
18. Allow me to do my job without interference	
19. Provide a professional work environment	
20. Provide for a good working relationship with co-workers	

21. Experienced and responsible leadership willing to accept and take risks
22. An organization that will grow along with the community
23. Support from administrators and supervisors
24. Good working conditions
25. More hands on training
26. They would not micro-manage
27. A fun place to work
28. Do not play favorites and treat everyone the same
29. Follow written policy for everyone and when you make a mistake, admit it
30. Let current and future needs of operations guide the district
31. A place to stay until I retire
32. Friendly managers and staff
33. Have our own training facility
34. A commitment to safety
35. Be pro-active
36. Others that work as hard as I do
37. A good physical training program
38. A program to reduce mental stress
39. An organization that will provide for my family if something happens
40. Let me know when I screw up so I can correct it
41. Detailed job description for each job
42. Keep employees informed of changes and the reason why
43. Have enough personnel to allow more people off per shift

44. Provide concrete goals and feedback on performance
45. Have good working relationships with other departments in the area
46. A complete regard for employees' integrity
47. Encourage employee's to keep families first in their life
48. Provide a good public image
49. A good understanding of employees families and their needs
50. Provide for a good workplace with a good atmosphere
51. Loyalty to the employee, second only to the citizens

Appendix D

Chino Valley Fire District Employee Expectations of Their Organization EFO Survey Answers (n=16)

1. Wages and benefits comparable with like organizations	69%
2. Current training and equipment to do the job	44%
3. Provide opportunity and support for personal and professional development	31%
4. Keep up with recommended standards for equipment and staffing	31%
5. Be treated fairly and with respect	31%
6. Competent leadership that will work together	18%
7. Support from supervisors and administration	12%
8. Commitment to safety	12%
9. Good communications up and down the ladder	12%
10. Safe work environment	12%
11. Follow written policy for everyone-clean and concise rules	
12. Best possible service to the public	
13. Professional environment	
14. Provide training and opportunities for career advancement	
15. A means to voice opinion	
16. Good working conditions and environment	
17. Progress forward and not backward; be pro-active	
18. More freedom; allow to do your job without interference	
19. Grow along with the community	
20. Union minded	

Appendix E

Mayer Fire District Employee Expectations of Their Organization EFO Survey Answers (n=5)

1. Wages and benefits comparable with like organizations	100%
2. Up to date training and equipment to do the job	60%
3. Provide training and opportunities for career advancement	60%
4. Stable, competent, quality leadership	40%
5. Provide opportunity and support for personal and professional development	40%
6. A safe work environment	20%
7. Job stability and security	20%
8. Grow along with the community	20%
9. Best possible service to the public	20%
10. Foresight with long term planning	20%
11. Loyalty to members and citizens	
12. Provide all uniform items needed for employees	
13. Provide a non-threatening work environment	
14. Professionalism displayed throughout ranks	

Appendix F

Prescott Fire Department Employee Expectations of Their Organization EFO Survey Answers (n=24)

1. Wages and benefits comparable with like organizations	88%
2. Keep up with recommended standards for equipment and staffing	58%
3. Be treated fairly and with respect	42%
4. A safe work environment	25%
5. Up to date training and equipment to do the job	25%
6. Good communication up and down the ladder	17%
7. Provide training and opportunities for career advancement	17%
8. Grow along with the community	17%
9. Consistency in personnel management	13%
10. Loyalty to your employees, putting them second only to the citizens	13%
11. Good working conditions	
12. Competent stable leadership with goals for improvement	
13. Be fully supportive of education and training requests including pay and time off	
14. Total cooperation with other local fire agencies	
15. Better assistance for retired and retiring members	
16. Set rules and standards that are adhered to	
17. Maintain tools and equipment in top shape, not just get by	
18. Chief officers that do as they say and vice versa	
19. Employees that understand where they fit into the organization	
20. Be there for us when we have issues at home and at work	

21. Don't spread department too thin trying to be all things to all people (wildland programs)
22. Integrity and professionalism the way we do business
23. Reasonable and achievable expectations of employees
24. Coordination with union of issues and presentations
25. A department that is PR marketing oriented
26. A detailed job description for each job
27. A program to reduce mental stress
28. Best possible service to the public
29. Be open to new ideas and technology
30. Don't micro-manage
31. Good stations and living quarters
32. Employees are able to take ownership of their position
33. Provide good role models
34. Provide environment that encourages learning, personal growth, sense of family
35. Show pride in being the best and oldest fire department in the state
36. Stop Auto Aid with Central Yavapai Fire, we should serve our own citizens