A STUDY OF EFFECTIVE EXIT INTERVIEW PROCESSES TO BE POTENTIALLY USED BY THE EAGLE RIVER FIRE PROTECTION DISTRICT

LEADING COMMUNITY RISK REDUCTION

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CERTIFICATION STATEMENT

I hereby certify that this paper constitutes my own product, that where the language of others is set forth, quotation marks so indicate, and that appropriate credit is given where I have used the language, ideas, expressions, or writings of another.

Signed: _____

Abstract

The problem was that there was no means to adequately determine why Eagle River Fire Protection District (ERFPD) members are choosing to leave employment with the fire department. The purpose of this research paper was to establish criteria as a basis for an exit interview process that will allow ERFPD to identify problem areas and potential solutions leading to improved employee retention. This was a descriptive research project. The research questions were:

1. What means of communication is ERFPD currently providing exiting employees?

2. What are other area fire and emergency organizations doing for exit interviews?

3. What does private industry say about the need for exit interviews?

4. What standard components are necessary for effective exit interviews?

The procedures for question one involved a review of the ERFPD Standard Operating Guidelines and personal communication with the department's Local Union President. The procedure for question two involved sending a feedback form to area fire and emergency organizations to determine what others are doing for exit interviews. Procedures for questions three involved a comprehensive review of known experts in the field of Human Resources by interviewing ERFPD's Human Resource Specialist and human resource specialists at corporations known as national and regionally recognized industry leaders in employee satisfaction. Question four's procedures involved a review of sample exit interview forms returned with the feedback forms from area fire and emergency organizations.

Research results indicated that the exit interview process for ERFPD does not measure up to the practices of other area fire departments, and falls far short of the

private industry's norm for a potentially effective overall process. The responses to the

research questions were tabulated numerically and by percentages. It was determined

that there were a variety of professional opinions of what makes up an effective exit

interview, but proper utilization of them would actually aid ERFPD in future employee

retention efforts.

Recommendations were for the ERFPD to begin a more detailed and systematic

process of exit interviews. Findings should not be filed away, but regularly reviewed and

acted upon. The current market supports this employee/employer benefit and the

financial impact seems to be small in comparison to the potential advantages gained in

improved morale and increased levels of member retention.

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Introduction

The problem is that there is no means to adequately determine why Eagle River Fire Protection District (ERFPD) members are choosing to leave employment with the fire department. The purpose of this research paper was to establish criteria as a basis for an exit interview process that may allow ERFPD to identify problem areas and potential solutions leading to improved employee retention. This was a descriptive research project. The research questions were:

1. What means of communication is ERFPD currently providing exiting employees?

2. What are other area fire and emergency medical service organizations doing for exit interviews?

3. What does private industry say about the need for exit interviews?

4. What standard components are necessary for effective exit interviews?

Background and Significance

Eagle River Fire Protection District (ERFPD) is located in the heart of the Rocky Mountains, protecting Avon, Colorado and several other surrounding mountain communities. ERFPD is a combination fire department consisting of 40 full-time employees, 26 resident firefighters, and approximately 10 active volunteers. The fire district encompasses several first-class ski resorts, a multitude of wildland/urban interface potential, multi-million dollar resort homes, high-rise resort facilities, and a rapidly increasing population. Nine fire stations protect over 300 square miles of fire district, including thousands of acres of White River National Forest land.

The fire department in the Avon metro area has seen much change since 1970, including several name changes over the years including Eagle-Vail Fire Department, Eagle River Fire Department, Avon Dept. of Public Safety, Town of Avon Fire Department, and now presently the Eagle River Fire Protection District (ERFPD) after consolidating with several neighboring fire departments on January 1, 2001. Since that time, ERFPD's personnel has increased sharply, going from only two staffed stations, to its current level of six stations staffed 24-hours a day. The fire district's call volume has more than doubled in 10 years, to over 2400 per year. Over the course of the last several years, there had been many additional paid personnel hired to staff fire stations built or acquired into the fire district, but also to fill vacancies of those who left to accept employment elsewhere. This is where the problem begins.

Just over the previous five years (1999-2004), 25 career employees of the Eagle River Fire Protection District (ERFPD) have left employment for various reasons. This represents a 63% total staff turnover, or an average of nearly 13% turnover per year. If resident and volunteer firefighters were factored in, the numbers would be staggeringly high. ERFPD's soaring level of turnover has lead to a distinct and obvious lack of experienced personnel, increased hiring/training costs, and reduced staffing levels. Operationally, these issues have resulted in a reduction in customer service and an increase in unacceptable community risk levels. In the past, when employees left ERFPD, the method for conducting exit interviews was vague, sporadically enforced, and the information was rarely passed on to department members who could successfully make needed changes based on this system. Instead of using the information gathered to

recognize negative patterns and implement cultural changes, in regards to high employee turnover, it was instead lost in a bureaucratic shuffle and filed away.

Presently, ERFPD is continuing to lose full-time employees at an alarming rate. Currently, after employees announce their plans to leave employment with ERFPD, they are provided a very short exit interview form (Appendix A), which is to be filled out on their own time, and returned to the department's human resource specialist. No exit interview, per say, actually takes place. The process consists of the employee turning the form into the department's human resource specialist, who then files it. Really, the meeting only takes place in order to complete necessary paperwork and to collect departmental items. Some of the exiting employees do not even take the time to fill out this form and many have suggested that the process is a waste of their time. What information may be gathered from the exit interview form is randomly reviewed by both the human resource specialist and the fire chief and then placed in the employee's personnel file. However, the process still seems to be sporadically enforced with several employees leaving without even completing the process. Presently, no departmental or personnel changes have been made based on the information gathered from this process, resulting in poor organizational effectiveness and continued turnover troubles.

The probable future impact of this study is important to the Eagle River Fire Protection District (ERFPD) for two reasons. First, the increasing levels of employee turnover are causing severe retention concern for the remaining employees. By using the results of this paper, the author hopes to determine if an effective process of interviewing exiting employees that utilizes information gathered, will lead to reduce future turnover and increased job satisfaction levels department-wide. Secondly, it is the hopes of the

author to use this research paper in looking to the future for developing an effective exit interview process that may be implemented within the fire district. This process should assist ERFPD in learning from the comments of employees as they leave, and by making necessary changes, help ERFPD become an industry leader in employee satisfaction and retention.

The author has chosen this research problem because of its relation to the National Fire Academy's (1998) Executive Fire Officer Program course: *Leading Community Risk Reduction.* Unit 3's terminal objective in the NFA's Student Manual (1998) states that the student "will be able to create a plan to change the organizational culture in support of community risk reduction" (p. SM2-2). By identifying a basis for an effective exit interview process that results in changes to ERFPD's organizational culture through reduced employee turnover, firefighters will have better defined strategies for supporting community risk reduction.

This research project relates to the United States Fire Administration operational objective: "to promote within communities a comprehensive, multi-hazard risk reduction plan led by the fire service organization" (NFA, 2002, p. II-2). By taking steps to reduce employee turnover and identify common problems among exiting fire department members, the fire service as a whole will be better prepared to successfully accomplish the above objective.

<div align="center">Literature Review</div>

A literature review was initiated at the National Emergency Training Center's (NETC) Learning Resource Center (LRC) in April of 2004. Additional research was conducted through the Internet, professional journals, and personal interviews. The

purpose of this literature review is to discover what others are saying and doing about exit interviews, and to what extent others may feel that exit interviews play into employee retention. Four basic questions must be addressed. First, what means of communication is the Eagle River Fire Protection District currently providing exiting employees? Secondly, what are other area fire and emergency services departments doing for exit interviews? Third, what does private industry say about the need for exit interviews? Lastly, what standard components are necessary for effective exit interviews?

For the Eagle River Fire Department (ERFPD), as with other private and public corporations, attaining and analyzing feedback is a critical component in instituting an effective recruitment and retention process for reducing unwanted turnover and improving employee performance. Not everything will work for every organization; instead a method must be found that works well for each organization's specific needs, catered to its individual employees. This collection of vital information can be obtained in several manners; however one which often tends to be overlooked and underestimated is the exit interview. Exit interviews "are often an effective tactic to understand why people are leaving and how to most effectively enhance retention" (Elsdon, 2000, ¶ 3). Everyone knows that employee turnover is expensive, which is why it's important to know that "exit interviews have proven to be a very effective way to gather the necessary data to take corrective action at a very low cost" (McKenzie, 2003, ¶ 5). Exit interviews are defined as "conversations with departing employees to learn their views of the organization" (Stevens, 1996, p. 486). In other words, the exit interview is a "meeting

with a departing employee in which you find out their reasons for leaving as well as their attitudes about the organization" (Smith, 2003, ¶ 2).

To answer the question of what means of communication ERFPD is currently providing exiting employees, a review of ERFPD's Standard Operating Guidelines (SOG) was completed. In SOG number 1.1.2.5 (Eagle River Fire Protection District, 2003), it states:

> Employee must make an appointment with the Administrative Manager prior to final date of employment to attend Exit Interview at which time all final documentation shall be completed, COBRA benefit information reviewed, and confirmation that the return of all ERFPD property as outlined in the Employee Handbook and SOG, i.e. radio, gear, credit cards, ect. has been met (p. 1).

In SOG number 1.1.2.6 (Eagle River Fire Protection District, 2003), it further instructs the employee that prior to meeting with the administrative manager, "the employee must complete the Employee Exit Interview Questionnaire and forward to the Administrative Manager at the scheduled Exit Interview meeting" (p. 1). For ERFPD the exit interview process is more of a meeting to retrieve departmental items and cover future benefit information, than a process used to identify employee concerns and issues needing addressed.

To further answer the question of what means of communication ERFPD is currently providing exiting employees, the author performed a personal interview on June 23, 2004, with Local Union 4245's President, Todd Marty. Mr. Marty has been an employee of ERFPD for the past six years and currently holds the rank of Firefighter/Engineer. Mr. Marty is heavily involved in departmental projects, including

firefighter union activities, responsibilities for all radio and communications equipment, and he holds positions on several other departmental committees. The author chose Mr. Marty for an interview based on his professional level of participation in departmental activities and his rank as president of the local union. When asked about his perception of the communication ERFPD is currently providing exiting employees, Mr. Marty replied, "I see a process that lacks definite substance, perceived benefits, and is only provided to some of the exiting employees" (personal communication, June 23, 2004). Mr. Marty felt that the idea of using an exit interview was a good idea, but ERFPD's method left much to be desired. He too, had noticed a specifically high level of turnover, but was unsure what might be the underlying cause. However, Mr. Marty stated, "I tend to feel that an effective exit interview process would be a good first step towards identifying underlying causes of increased turnover levels" (personal communication, June 23, 2004).

To find out what other area fire departments were doing for exit interviews, an extensive review of books, periodicals, and trade journals was completed at the National Emergency Training Center's (NETC) Learning Resource Center (LRC) in April 2004. Unfortunately, there was a definite lack of information published on the topic of exit interviews directly relating to fire and emergency organizations. Other than the National Fire Academy's (2001) recommendation that "if a volunteer resigns, conduct an exit interview to find out why he or she is leaving and suggestions for improving the position and/or volunteer experience in your agency" (p. 3.45), no other related information was found. Hence, the author of this research paper has chosen to address this question

further in the procedures and results section of this research paper, based on the feedback forms returned by other area fire and emergency organizations.

What does the private industry say about the need for exit interviews? Exit interviews are an "effective way to ascertain the REAL reasons employees change jobs" (McKenzie, 2003, ¶ 1), feel many human resource experts in the private sector.   Exit interviews can be used to gather diagnostic and strategic information, ascertain the reasons for problems (such as turnover and absenteeism), or help identify training and developmental needs.   Dr. Nick Bontis (Creelman, 2001), who has achieved widespread recognition for his writing and speaking on intellectual capital and knowledge management, compares the impact of turnover to intellectual capital. He says that "turnover has a significant negative correlation with human capital effectiveness…letting knowledge walk out the door has a negative impact on organizational efficiency" (Creelman, 2001, Section 2, ¶ 3). Solving that negative impact is exactly what is needed for an organization experiencing a higher than normal level of employee turnover.

In his book *Human Resources – Emphasizing Practical Problem Solving and Day-to-Day Operating Details*, R.G. Renckly (1997) advises us that an "excellent tool of personnel management…is the exit interview process" (p.210). He also states that the "exit interview process assists the human resources practitioner in determining patterns or trends of events occurring within a company or department, and will often reveal critical problems with supervision, or with work rules, wages, or working conditions that do not surface while the person is still employed" (1997, p.210). In fact, a human resources outsourcing article found on the Internet (AON Consulting Forum, 2003), recommends that a "structured exit interview program can reap significant benefits by helping to

identify problems and process improvements, as well as potential litigation issues" (¶ 1).

Exit interviews will also allow you to "provide employees with all the information they

need about termination of the employee relationship, while you get the benefits of finding

out about your organization's strengths and weaknesses" (Smith, 2001, Conclusion

section, ¶ 1).

"The real benefit of exit interviews is the chance to exchange information…. At the

same time, the employee may share with you important information affecting your

organization. And the process involves minimal cost and time" (Smith, 2001, ¶ 4).

Obviously, exit interviews are not going to uncover or solve all the issues within a

company. They do however, according to Ron Elsdon (2000), an account executive

responsible for meeting the needs of local and international organizations in the Silicon

Valley, "form a crucial part of any thorough human resource strategy" (¶ 8). Elsdon

(2000) also states "a well-managed exit interview with an employee who has resigned is a

valuable investment. It can reveal problems that may otherwise go unnoticed and can

provide helpful information for further company improvement in areas such as

recruitment, management, supervision, job design, remuneration, or career planning and

development" (¶ 3). An even greater value of exit interviews may be realized in the

analysis of group trends. "Survey trend reports often reveal significant demographic, job-

specific, and organizational information essential to a root cause organizational analysis"

(AON Consulting Forum, 2003, ¶ 4).

To answer the question of what standard components are necessary for effective

exit interviews, the author looked to what the human resource experts had to say. First,

what must be decided is how to conduct the exit interview. Pam Roland (2000) states in

her article *Exit Interviews,* "Exit Interviews can be conducted in person or on the telephone, in a written survey or on a Web site. They can take place while employees are still on the payroll or several weeks after they have left. Reasonable minds disagree about the form exit interviews should take; there are benefits and drawbacks to each" (¶ 7). There really seems to be no hard data proving one method is any better than the other, experts just agree that exit interviews should be conducted. The list of suggested sample questions to ask during exit interviews is staggering, so an abbreviated list follows:

- At the time you joined the company, what attracted you to the organization? What were your initial impressions and how have they changed since then?

- What do you value most about the organization?

- What is the single most important thing the company has contributed to your life?

- What are your opinions of your salary and benefits?

- What were the best and worst things about working here?

- What might have allowed you to perform your job better or more easily?

- Were you satisfied with your workload?

- Describe a time when you felt most committed to the company and its purpose? Why did you feel such commitment?

- People in the company say they want to "make a difference." What is the best example of when the company provided you with a chance to do that?

- Where have you accepted a new position, and what factors influenced the desire to move elsewhere?

- Do you have any specific complaints about any supervisors or other co-workers? (Elsdon, 2000; Rohland, 2000; Smith, 2001)

It's important to remember, however, that you shouldn't "ask questions about things you're not willing to change because it sets up expectations among existing staff" (Rohland, 2000, Section 3, ¶ 3). Exit interviews should be conducted based on the premise that problems found will be addressed and fixed.   Questions on the following topics may help organizations identify those specific problem areas: reasons for leaving, job satisfaction, working conditions, working relationships, career development, and management effectiveness (Elsdon, 2000). Exit interviews can also be used to address some clearinghouse items such as: the continuation of health benefits, severance packages, payment for unused vacation, distribution of final check, transfer of company property, and any non-compete or confidentiality agreements, if applicable (Smith, 2001).

Lastly, many human resource specialists are now recommending the idea of a post-exit interview. This might entail mailing a survey or conducting a formal phone interview with former employees two to 12 months after separation (McKenzie, 2003). It's reported that by using this method, "managers can expect to hear different answers than they would in a traditional exit interview…because people are less emotional and have had time to reflect and compare their new workplace to their former company" (Rohland, 2000, Section 5, ¶ 2). Another suggestion for increasing the odds of a quick and accurate response is to include a $5 dollar bill to the questionnaire to reimburse

respondents for their time and effort. If no response is received after 30 days, a follow-up questionnaire should be mailed (Rohland, 2000).

In summary, based on this literature review, it was found that many different thoughts, ideas, and concepts regarding exit interviews exist. However it can easily be said that industry standards call for some type of process to be in place. The literature review has influenced this research in that the author found that nearly all the literature highly recommended that progressive organizations utilize some form of an exit interview to assist in improving employee satisfaction and reducing employee turnover. A newfound respect for the benefits of exit interviews was grown from evaluating the current literature on the subject. Based on the findings of the review, the author has determined that exit interviews are an important part of employee retention. Being so, the author will now focus research on the exit interview processes currently being used by other area fire and emergency organizations, private corporations, and determining what standard components are necessary for effective exit interviews.

Procedures

To receive research information on question number one, the author conducted a personal interview with ERFPD's Human Resource Specialist, Kris Nash on August 24, 2004. The purpose of this interview was to determine specific information about ERFPD's exit interview process, find out what happens to that information, and to discover the interviewee's expert professional opinions on the overall process.

In regards to question number two, a feedback form (Appendix B) was developed to gather data on the usage of exit interviews among other area fire and emergency medical service (EMS) departments. The basic impacting constructs to be answered were: (a) is

someone assigned to perform human resource functions, (b) are exit interviews performed, (c) who performs them, (d) is the information shared with anyone, (e) what then happens to that information, (f) is a high level of turnover experienced, (g) and in their professional opinion, do exit interviews benefit the organization?

The seven-question feedback form was developed by the author and reviewed by an Executive Fire Officer graduate for question validity and clarity. Approval for validity and clarity was given (J. McCaulley, personal communication, July 3, 2004).   The feedback forms were sent to thirty area fire and emergency organizations during the month of August of 2004. The author chose participants from a list of formerly surveyed departments by the human resource specialist corporation: Mountain States Employer Council, Inc. (2004). Participating agencies were chosen based on relatively comparable demographics to ERFPD, such as size, budget, proximity, and amount of employees.

Regarding the feedback form, the first question attempts to determine whether the department has a human resource department or someone assigned to those functions. The following two questions attempt to ascertain whether the department conducts exit interviews and who performs them. The next two questions explore what happens to the information, once gathered from exiting employees. The next question asked is based on whether the department experiences high turnover, such as Eagle River Fire Protection District. Lastly, the final question asks the person completing the feedback form their professional opinion of exit interviews. A follow-up note was added to the bottom of the feedback form requesting a copy of the organization's exit interview questions to be included with the returned form, if possible.

Procedures for question three involved a comprehensive review of known experts in the field of Human Resources. Known experts in the fields of exit interviews and human resource development were researched at the Learning Resources Center on the campus of the National Fire Academy and over the Internet on the worldwide web. Lastly, several personal interviews were conducted with human resource specialists at corporations known as national and regionally recognized industry leaders in employee satisfaction. The purpose of these procedures was to see what private industry had to say first-hand about the need for exit interviews in the workplace.

The procedure for question number four involved a comprehensive review of other area fire and emergency organizations' exit interview forms that were included with their feedback forms, per the request of the author.

Limitations and Assumptions

This is only a preliminary study. Several research components are beyond the scope of this paper. No attempt has been made as far as the development, writing, and administration of an effective exit interview process. Next, due to an overabundance of exit interview forms, methods, and numerous variables within the exit interview process, it was necessary to narrow the scope of this research to applications which will potentially only benefit the Eagle River Fire Protection District.

Other limiting factors of the research were the relatively small group of fire and emergency organizations who were provided the feedback form, actually returned it, and the inability of the author to determine if this is an accurate sample of the fire service. Finally, it is assumed that the respondents were knowledgeable and answered honestly as it applied to the subject matter.

Definition of Terms

COBRA – Consolidated Omnibus Budget Reconciliation Act of 1985 (COBRA). This act was signed into law in 1986, requiring employers to provide group benefits to employees through a group plan. This act also requires that qualified beneficiaries and employees be given the option of continuing group benefit coverage for a limited time after their coverage would otherwise terminate, with some exceptions (Stevens, 1996).

Human Resources – a function that deals with all aspects of a company's employees. Sometimes responsible for the administration of compensation, benefits, equal employment, employee counseling, and all other matters of employer-employee relationships (Renckly, 1997).

Resident Firefighters – Firefighters at Eagle River Fire Protection District who are permitted residency in a fire station in exchange for working an assigned shift for nominal pay and the receipt of an all-expenses paid associate degree at a local community college.

SOG – Standard Operating Guidelines (SOG). A written collection of guidelines, procedures, and policies representing ERFPD's desired way to meet its mission and reflect their values and vision. These guidelines represent the department-approved way to approach an activity, operation, or situation. They provide a reasonable template that is applicable most of the time for a given topic. Employees are expected to follow guidelines – although variance is granted if the safety of personnel is at conflict or the situation dictates a more prudent course (Eagle River Fire Protection District, 2003).

Results

The results of question number one were ascertained by conducting a personal interview with Eagle River Fire Protection District's Human Resource Specialist, Kris Nash on August 24, 2004. Mrs. Nash has been employed by ERFPD for the past two years and her duties include working with all aspects of ERFPD's employees. She is responsible for the administration of compensation, benefits, equal employment, employee counseling, and all other matters of employer-employee relationships. Based on her expert professional knowledge and position within the organization, Mrs. Nash was interviewed. Currently, the ERFPD utilizes a short, one page exit interview form (Appendix A) that is found on the departmental computer server. The employee is expected to download that form, complete it, and bring it with them to the exit interview previously scheduled by human resources. Mrs. Nash (personal communication, August 24, 2004) stated that she rarely used the interview to glean more information, but rather give them an opportunity to voice any further concerns and then collect the form and other departmental items from the employee. The exit interview form is then shown to the fire chief, and thereafter permanently placed in the exiting employee's personnel file.

Mrs. Nash (personal communication, August 24, 2004) admits that the process "may be flawed, but felt it was miles ahead of where ERFPD was a few years ago, when no process took place at all for exiting employees." Since the exit interview process has been included into ERFPD Standard Operating Guidelines (SOG), it has increased the likelihood that an exit interview will take place. However, though it has become a more regular process, "it still doesn't guarantee that the forms will get filled out accurately, truthfully, or even at all" (K. Nash, personal communication, August 24, 2004). Mrs.

Nash (personal communication, August 24, 2004) stated that she "expects to entirely revamp the process soon, and include some suggested questions directly relating harassment, for legality purposes." All in all, Mrs. Nash (personal communication, August 24, 2004) was pleased that we had a process, but was very open to the possibility of needed improvement to the system.

For the results of question number two, we look to the feedback form (Appendix B) that was mailed out to 30 area fire and emergency organizations in August of 2004. A total of 18 feedback forms were returned, consisting of 60% of the organizations surveyed. The purpose of this feedback form was to ascertain what other area emergency organizations were doing as far as exit interviews were concerned. Beginning with feedback form question number one, the organizations were questioned as to whether they had someone assigned in their organization to human resource functions. As noted in the following figure (see figure 1), it is statistically obvious that a majority of organizations do indeed have someone assigned to these functions, as does the Eagle River Fire Protection District. An overwhelming rate of 87% of departments has either a Human Resource (HR) department or someone assigned to those duties. However, what is undetermined is to what level this person is actually trained to adequately perform these functions.
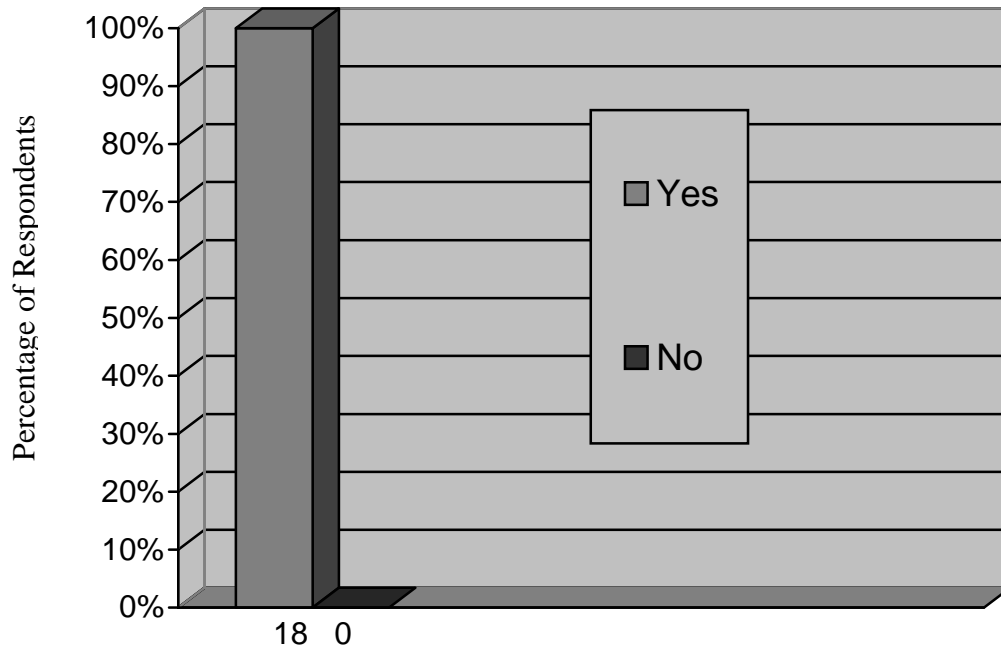
Figure 1

Does your organization have a Human Resource Department or someone specifically assigned to those functions? n18
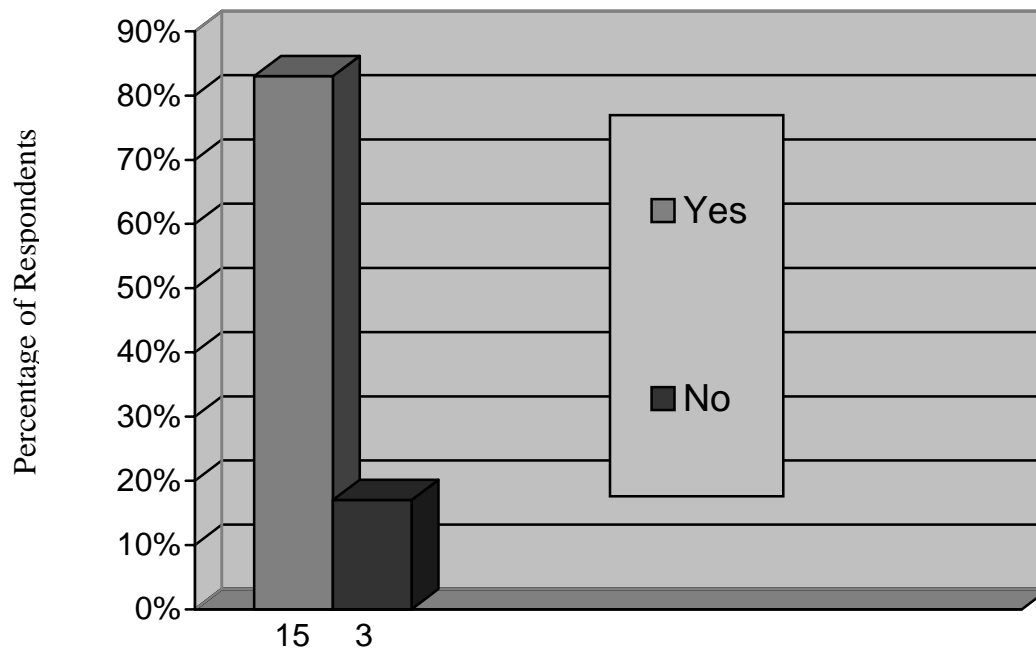

The next feedback form question was whether or not the organization performed exit interviews. Unbelievably, all departments (100%) returning the feedback forms do indeed perform exit interviews (see figure 2), proving that this must indeed be a standard practice among fire and emergency organizations.

Figure 2

## Does your organization perform exit interviews? n18

Next we address the question of who performs the exit interviews. The numbers show that a majority of the time it is the fire chief, human resources personnel, or both. As can be viewed in Figure 3, there are a wide variety of individuals that may participate in this process, but most often (56% of the time) the fire chief is involved in this process. On a side note, the numbers do not add up to 100% due to the ability of those surveyed to choose more than one answer, if applicable. Many of the feedback forms returned have multiple positions circled, showing that there are a multitude of different combinations of individuals that are involved in the exit interview. It really seems to be a matter of department preference.

Figure 3

Who performs the exit interviews? n18
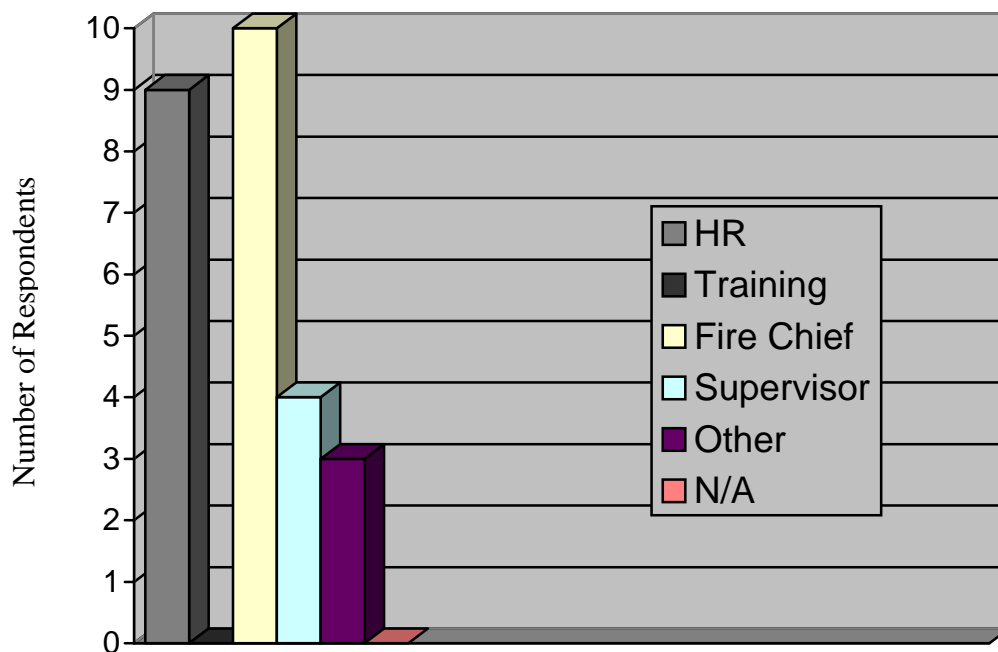
For feedback question number four, the author attempts to determine if the exit interview

information is shared with anyone, and if so, whom. The results heavily favor the sharing

of the information, with 72% of responding organizations stating that personnel, other

than just the fire chief, will see information from the exit interview (see figure 4). Some

of the personnel that were mentioned included: assistant chiefs, supervisor(s), command

staff, human resources, board of director members, captains, directors of public safety,

deputy chiefs, fire marshals, general and administration managers, senior staff, assistant

chiefs of operations, office managers, district chiefs, division chiefs, and chief officers.

The respondent that circled 'N/A,' did perform exit interviews, but hired a third party

corporation to perform these. This private corporation felt that the information obtained

was personal, and should not be shared.

Figure 4

Is the exit interview information shared with anyone beside the fire chief? n18
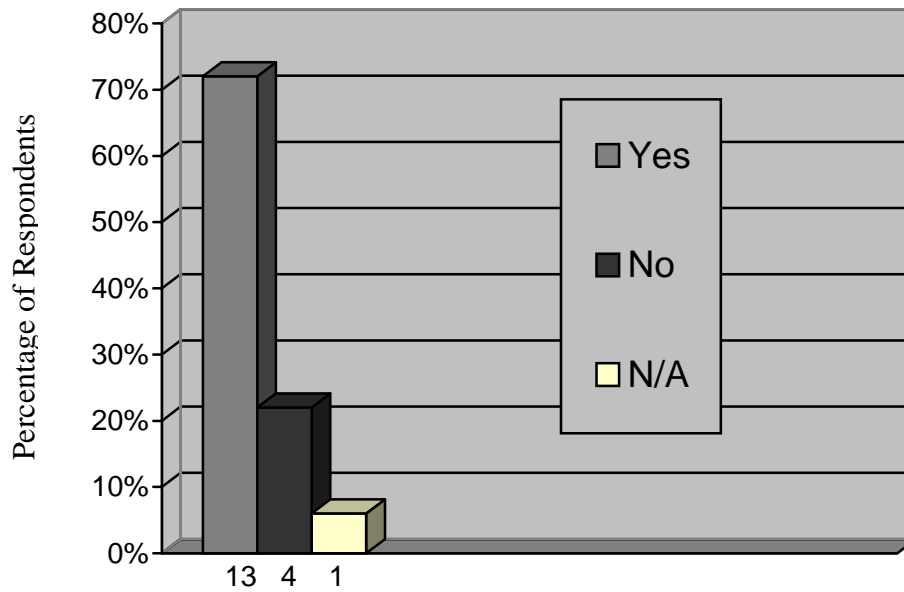
Looking at feedback form question number five, the author attempts to determine what happens to the information following the exit interview. An overwhelming percentage, 72% of those responding, placed the information into the employee's personnel file and 44% of those shared the information with senior organizational staff members (see figure 5). It's remarkable to note that a very small percentage, 22%, filed the information into a separate exit interview file. Also interesting, only 22% of the organizations surveyed periodically reviewed the information to make any changes based on the information complied. Those that marked 'other' on their feedback forms had the following comments: the process is informal, nothing is in writing; the information is

reviewed at time of exit to determine the issues and who or what they involve; and forms

are reviewed by town manager, assistant manager, and the department head.

Figure 5

What happens to the information from the exit interviews? n18
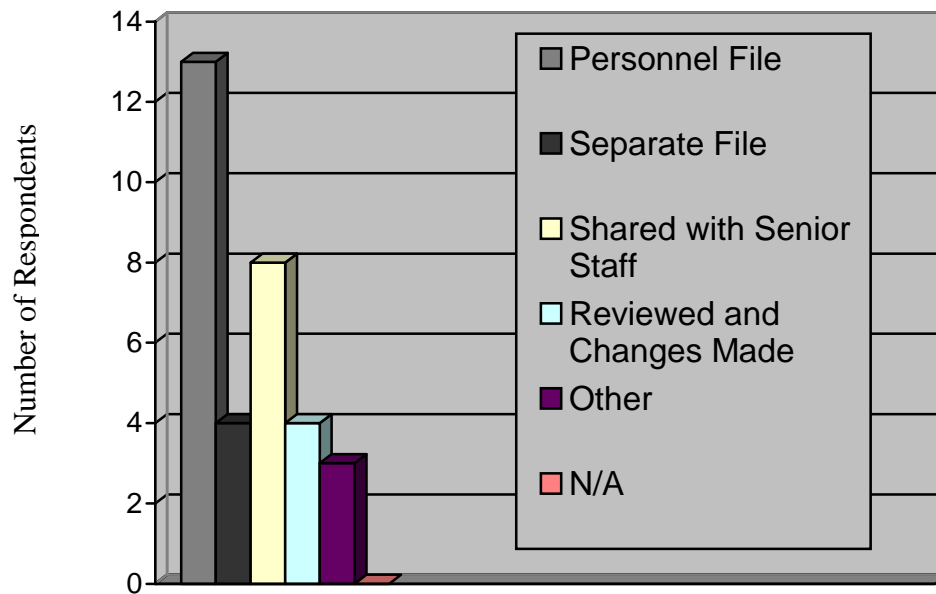
Addressing feedback form question number six, the author asks the respondent if

in their opinion, their organization experiences a higher than normal level of employee

turnover. Interestingly, all the respondents (100%) answered 'no' to that question (see

figure 6).

Figure 6

Does your organization experience higher than normal employee turnover? n18
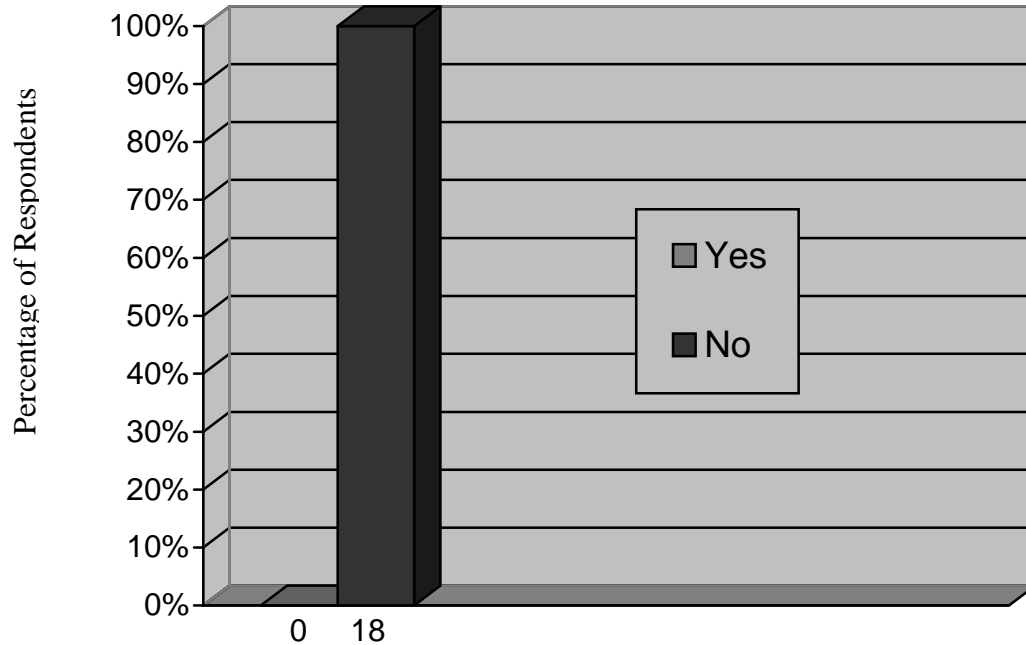
Lastly, we look at feedback question number seven, where the author tries to determine the respondent's professional opinion of whether or not exit interviews have benefited their department, and in what way. Another overwhelming response in support of the benefits of exit interviews is shown in figure number six, with 83% of those in favor of the process. Some of the respondent's comments in support of the exit interview process include:

- Identifies weaknesses or blind spots;

- Determines possible personnel or management issues that may need attention;

- Improves employee – volunteer/reserve relations;

- Opens eyes to potential problems and provides a course of how to fix them;

- Good information for management;

- Gets the reason employee is changing jobs;

- Use information to better the department;

- Let's us know where we can improve – what we are doing well and where we are not performing well, only if they are honest;

- Alerts the district to potential problem areas;

- Protects the district from claims of discrimination;

- Gives the employee information about pension funds;

- It shows us which managers might need additional training;

- Provides candid information, which might otherwise be generally outside of management's ability to observe.

Of the 17% that did not feel that the exit interview process was useful, the following comments were included:

- No consistency with sending out the interviews and those sent ones did not return them;

- Feedback is generally not used, would do better to do a formal, written exit interview for future reference;

- Only have one or two per year maximum at this time – which are usually retiring personnel;

- Very few quit for another department.

Figure 7

Has performing exit interviews benefited your department in any way? n18
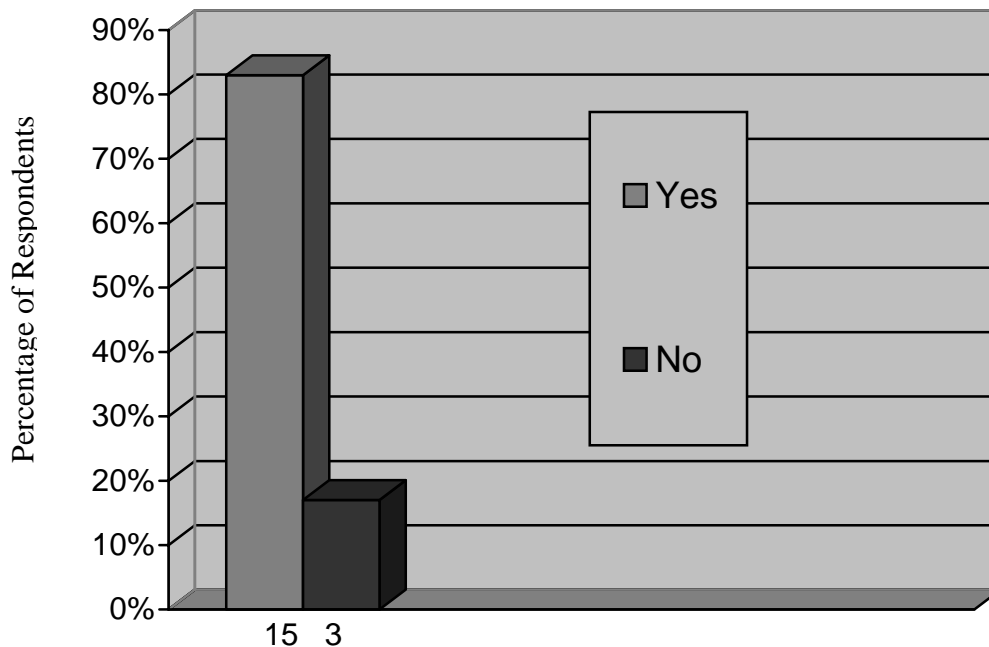
For the results of research question number three, we look to the personal

interviews conducted with several known experts in the field of human resources at

corporations known as national and regionally recognized industry leaders in employee

satisfaction. The interviews were conducted to try and get a better understanding of if

and how companies administer exit interviews, and what is done with the information

after it is gathered. Human resource professionals from Farmland Mutual Insurance

Company, Iowa Telecom, Townsend Engineering, and MidAmerican Energy were

contacted and asked the following questions[*]:

1. Do you feel that exit interviews are important in private industry?

---

[*] Interviews were conducted by author in partial fulfillment of a Graduate Studies course on Human Resource Management, Fall of 2003, at Drake University, Des Moines, Iowa.

2. What are standard components in your company's exit interview process?

Farmland Mutual Insurance Company and its affiliate company, Nationwide®
Agribusiness Insurance Company, are recognized as one of the leading commercial
agribusiness insurers in the United States. Nationwide is one of the largest diversified
insurance and financial service providers in the country, with more than $117 billion in
assets and more than 50,000 employees, agents and producers.

Farmland Insurance's Corporate Human Resources (HR) Department is located in
Des Moines, Iowa and oversees 320 personnel in the main office and over 180 field-
associates nationwide.   Joel Feller (personal communication, November 11, 2003), the
company's Human Resource Specialist, acknowledges their exit interview process is an
extremely important process, but "isn't nearly as technical as others." "It includes a
checklist and an exit interview questionnaire" (Feller, personal communication,
November 11, 2003). About 40% of the associates supported by the corporate HR
department are in the field; so most of the time questionnaires are e-mailed to the
departing employee, with nearly all responding back. Some simply e-mail the exit
interview form back. Whereas, others want to meet to discuss things that they would
rather not put on the questionnaire, but still want to get off their minds. The HR
department would prefer to meet with everyone, but time, distance, and schedules prevent
this.

The questionnaire gives the associate an opportunity to respond to eleven specific
areas, determining how important each issue is to them on a scale of 1-5, with 1 being
"Completely Unimportant" and 5 being "Extremely Important." Then they respond to

how satisfied they were with HR, on the same scale, but with 1 being "Did Not Meet Expectations" and 5 being "Exceeded Expectations."   The 11 Areas are:

1 - Job Responsibility	7 - Job Challenge
2 - Group Integration	8 - Values & Culture
3 - Skills Training	9 - Compensation
4 - Ideas & Suggestions	10 - Rewards
5 - Organizational Dynamics	11 - Supervision
6 - Technology	

Each area also allows for comments; with approximately 40-50 percent of those responding having comments.

Once the information is gathered, human resources (HR) analyze the data. They look for company hot spots or burning issues that stand out. The information, both positive and negative, is then shared with the division head. The direct supervisor of the associate is not made aware of findings, unless issues arise specific to that individual. At that time, the HR department starts working with that person either one-on-one or offers further training opportunities to help resolve the issue.

The exit interview process ends with the final correspondence going out to the associate after they leave the company, which includes a termination letter, benefits overview, and a follow-up questionnaire to give the associate ample opportunity to give the company feedback on their workplace.

Next interviewed was Iowa Telecom, the second largest local telephone company in Iowa, serving over 400 communities across the state. Regarding Iowa Telecom's exit interview process, Jill Legg (personal communication, November 14, 2003), Iowa

Telecom's Employment Specialist, states, "This exit interview process is extremely helpful. Once a trend is spotted, the information is shared with the management personnel involved and they work closely with HR to help remedy the situation."   The exit interview process at Iowa Telecom is very much like other companies. On their last day of employment, employees are emailed an eleven-question survey, asking them to complete and return it before the end of the day. Once returned, the information is captured in a database to track themes and trends in the workplace.

Next to be interviewed was Townsend Engineering, inventor, designer, and manufacturer of meat processing machines and food processing equipment. Founded in 1942, Townsend Engineering is the inventor of hot dog and sausage linking machines, co-extrusion systems, curing-marinating injectors, meat recovery system, trimmers, skinners and meat, fish, poultry and lamb processing systems. Today, Townsend equipment is being used in over 100 countries throughout the world. Truly a corporate leader in employee retention; boasting a staff of 170, the company's annual turnover rate, unofficially, is less then 5 people (<3%) per year.

Townsend also has an interesting human resource (HR) structure. There is no standardized HR department at Townsend. The company is divided in four loosely based divisions: Administration/Finance, Product Development/Engineering, Manufacturing, and Sales. A Vice President, who makes all hiring and HR decisions, heads each section up.

According to Townsend HR Section Vice President Cate (S. Cate, Personal communication, November 10, 2003), there are "three situations where an exit interview process comes into play; when an employee leaves the company for another job; in cases

where the employee is let go; and when someone retires." In each case, there is the formal aspect of the exit process regarding benefits and such, which is done through the finance department. The other part of the exit process is informal and each VP has a different process.

There is no standardized written exit procedure, but they like to "make it friendly and understanding, and make it quick" (S. Cate, Personal communication, November 10, 2003). They feel this person has already disconnected from the company, so their heart would not be in the work. Also, this approach can minimize any disruption in the team chemistry. This works for both the employee who is leaving to go to another company and for those employees with which the company is parting ways.

The final situation is when a Townsend employee retires. The company utilizes the friendly and quick strategy, but also offers the employee other types of assistance. One major area offered is pre-retirement counseling to help the individual plan financially for their retirement years. Townsend believes in "the truth rules" motto and this goes a long way in maintaining open channels of communication between employees and management. They feel this is the most proactive approach to employee relations and minimizes problems as soon as they occur, resulting in very little overall turnover rates.

Lastly, MidAmerican Energy was interviewed. MidAmerican Energy, part of MidAmerican Energy Holdings Company, is one of the largest utility corporations in the Midwest and is strategically located in the middle of several major markets in the central region of the United States. The company provides service to more than 680,000 electric customers and more than 660,000 natural gas customers in a 10,600 square-mile area from Sioux Falls, South Dakota, to the Quad Cities area of Iowa and Illinois. The largest

communities served by MidAmerican in this region are Des Moines, Cedar Rapids, Sioux City, Waterloo, Iowa City and Council Bluffs, Iowa; the Quad Cities area of Iowa and Illinois; and Sioux Falls, South Dakota.

Like Farmland Mutual and Iowa Telecom, MidAmerican Energy has a formal exit interview process. This voluntary process includes an on-line survey form e-mailed to the departing employee as soon as they give notice they are leaving the company. Once the employee completes the survey, they are asked to do a follow-up interview with the HR department, either in person or via conference call. The HR department sees the whole exit interview process as one more opportunity to talk with the employee, since the corporate culture is to foster open, two-way communications among management and employees and emphasis management's role in removing barriers for the employee. This may be the reason why MidAmerican's turnover rate is a very, very low six percent.

According to Julie Sorsi (personal communication, November 18, 2003), Manager for Strategic Staffing for MidAmerican Energy, employees leaving MidAmerican "tend to be very open and helpful in providing information, making it a great process for information gathering". Also, if there is no preverbal 'ax to grind' by an employee, the HR department has found that they get great feedback regarding workplace culture, ways to improve and overall useful information. Once the information is gathered, the HR department analyses the data looking for any obvious patterns.

Utilizing the information gathered though management's daily interaction with employees and weekly update meetings; the HR department works with supervisors and managers to improve the organizational culture. For example, if an employee who is leaving indicates that he/she felt they did not receive enough initial training to do their

job, the HR depart then looks at initial employee training to determine overall relevancy and needed improvements. According to Sorsi (personal communication, November 18, 2003), their exit interviews found that "employees leave the job for one of three reasons: job advancement/more money elsewhere, not enough training or training opportunities, and personality conflicts with supervisor or coworkers."   The old adage 'the person left the supervisor, not the company,' tends to ring true based on trends MidAmerican Energy has found through exit interviews with departing workers (J. Sorsi, personal communication, November 18, 2003).

Lastly, the results for research question number four, what standard components are necessary for effective exit interviews, can be addressed by looking at the returned exit interview forms from surveyed area organizations. Out of the 30 organizations sent feedback forms, 18 returned the forms and a total of nine included requested copies of their organization's exit interview forms (50% of those who returned feedback forms). What was found was that all nine forms had the following similarities:

- Were of multiple pages in length;

- Asked employee's reason for leaving;

- Asked what they enjoyed most/least about their job;

- Asked their opinions of their supervisor(s)/manager(s);

- Asked what the new place of employment offered that would be more satisfying than their current job;

- Asked if their leaving could have been prevented;

- Asked what changes or suggestions would be made for improving their current organization;

- Asked whether they had received current performance appraisals;

- Had them rate the organization's benefits, insurance, retirement, pay, and opportunity for advancement;

- And gave them ample opportunity for personal comments

Overall, these forms all seemed very comprehensive and had a sufficient amount of questions to possibly get to the root of the issue. Two of the forms also had separate pages for the interviewer to actually rate the leaving employee on his/her answers. One exit interview form asked whether the employee would consider working for that organization again in the future.

Discussion

The results of this research paper were found to be very somewhat compatible with the findings of others discussed in the literature review. Beginning with research question number one, when looking at the literature review we find that the Eagle River Fire Protection District's (ERFPD) Standard Operating Guideline (SOG) book (2003, p. 1.1.2) has a minimal process laid out for the exiting employee. It has a short, one page form requiring the employee to fill out on their own, and then asks them to meet with the Human Resource Specialist, before terminating their employment with ERFPD.

However, after interviewing Kris Nash (personal communication, August 24, 2004), Human Resource Specialist, it was determined that any meetings held with the employee were basically only to complete and collect the necessary paperwork and departmental items. Often times, there was no review of the exit interview form with the employee during a formalized meeting. If there were a formal meeting, ERFPD sometimes didn't seem to 'get' the concept of the exit interview, allowing the employee

to be "under the impression that a meeting was to discuss COBRA benefits and retrieve the employee's key to the washroom" (Rohland, 2000, ¶ 4). This goes against much of the information found in the literature review. In his somewhat dated, yet still very useful book, *The Handbook of Modern Personnel Administration,* Famularo (1972) suggests that "the personnel department generally has the responsibility" for completing exit interviews (p.62-5). Stephanie Dodge (2001), Coordinator of Marketing Initiatives for *HR.com's Research Reports*, feels that "normally the HR manager conducts the interview" (¶ 2), rather than the employee's immediate supervisor. Also, many times ERFPD employees would leave the organization without the forms being completed exit interviews not taking place (Marty, personal communication, June 23,2004). However, to "be an effective and accurate tool, exit interviews should be conducted with all terminating employees, and the results or summary should be written up immediately after the interview" (Famularo, 1972, p. 62.4). Being as it is "not uncommon for companies to conduct exit interviews internally, then file the data and never use it," ERFPD would do well to "undertake a thorough analysis of the data and use it to improve problem areas" (Elsdon, 2000). This would lead one to believe that ERFPD's exit interview process is very incomplete and not comparable or compatible with the recommendations found in the review of applicable literature.

In regards to research question number two, when looking at what other area fire and emergency service organizations are doing for exit interviews, a problem arose. There was no information to be found, after a very extensive literature review, other than one suggestion by a National Fire Academy (2001) manual on volunteers, to "conduct exit interviews" on volunteer personnel who resign (p. 3.45). However, after seeing the

results of the feedback forms, it's extremely obvious that exit interviews are conducted by a majority of all fire and emergency organizations, there is just no information written on the topic, as of yet. It is also obvious that feedback gleaned from the exit interview process has proved very beneficial for the organizations returning the feedback forms. Interestingly, 100% of the organizations that routinely performed an exit interview process and shared the information with other organizational members also felt that they did not have a problem with high turnover. Which goes to prove that "as an organization increases its knowledge and sharing behavior, turnover decreases (Creelman, 2001, Section 2, ¶ 4).

In regards to research question number 3, we look at what the literature review has to say about exit interviews in the private industry versus what was discovered in the results section of this research paper.   In the literature review, we find that most professional experts in the field of human resource development agree that exit interviews are a necessary component for identifying problems and decreasing employee turnover.   Rohland (2000) states, "a good exit interview provides the company with valuable information that can give it a competitive edge in recruiting and retaining staff" (¶ 5). In his book, *The Handbook of Modern Personnel Administration,* Famularo (1972) states that:

> Efforts to reduce turnover can be likened to raising children. When
>
> children turn out to be "good" there is no simple answer or one thing
>
> that the parents did that resulted in their being good. Love, patience,
>
> understanding, encouragement, and discipline – all these and more are
>
> usually present. In the same way, turnover control is a complex

problem that requires an interest and concern for many variables if the

problem is to be attacked. While there is no panacea, there are

variables over which the employer has control. Proper attention to all

of them will result in …a corresponding reduction in costly turnover.

(p. 62-12)

However, addressing the turnover problem requires that we find out the nature and

magnitude of the problem (Famularo, 1972). All four of the companies interviewed

reported very little turnover problem, and interestingly, each had a defined and specific

process for performing effective exit interviews. Each of the four companies also felt

that the process was beneficial and an important part of their employee retention strategy.

Comparing the results of the research with the literature review, we find both to

be in perfect agreement as to the benefits of exit interviews. In his book, *Human*

Resources Management & Development Handbook, Tracey states, "the results that are

being achieved or not being achieved can point to the need for management training and

development. Exit interviews with the people who quit can pinpoint the problem and

thereby help determine the training and development need" (p.940). Likewise, Jill Legg

(personal communication, November 14, 2003), Iowa Telecom's Employment Specialist

stated that the results from exit interview process "very helpful. Once a trend is spotted,

the information is shared with the management personnel involved and they work closely

with HR to help remedy the situation." Definitely many in private industry have seen the

need for exit interviews and have reaped the benefits of low turnover levels and high

employee satisfaction.

When comparing the literature review with the results section on necessary components standard in effective exit interviews, we find distinct similarities. First, many of the same questions suggested for exit interviews by leading human resource experts are used by area fire and emergency response organizations. Job satisfaction, working conditions, working relationships, and opinions of management or supervision were some of the specific topics that were addressed by both (Elsdon, 2000). So, really, suggestions for areas of exit interview discussion were much the same. However, it seems that some of the results of the feedback forms suggest differing opinions and viewpoints than professional human resource experts. Such as who performs the exit interview process? Out of the 18 returned feedback forms, nine (50%) responded that Human Resources do, and 10 (56%) responded that the fire chief performs the exit interviews. Not that the fire chief of an average municipality is not heavily trained to perform his/her duties, but are they adequately prepared to take on the difficult skill and rarely mastered art of an exit interview? This important process should never be left in the hands of an amateur, because "success or failure of the exit interview depends on who conducts the exit interview" (Field, 2000, Section 2, ¶ 7). "If consistently presented and competently handled, the exit interview could alert management to: weak areas in supervisor training, sources of discrimination, inadequate grievance handling procedures, poor wage and/or benefit administration, and various other reasons for employee dissatisfaction" (Field, 2000). Should the average fire chief be willing to leave this information to chance? Rather, shouldn't most departments feel more comfortable if a well-trained, non-biased third party were performing this function? The fire service

would do well to learn from Dodge (2001), who states, "Normally the HR manager conducts the interview, rather than the employee's immediate supervisor" (¶ 2).

The returned feedback forms also showed one other discrepancy in the standard components for effective exit interviews - what exactly happens to that information after it is gathered? Thirteen out of 18 (72%) respondents filed the information away in the employee's personnel file and only four of 18 (22%) took that information back out to periodically review it and make needed changes. This is in direct conflict to what was found in the literature review. Many felt as Elsdon (2000) did when he wrote, "if the information is not utilized effectively, this will quickly become apparent to remaining employees and may create a 'why bother' attitude" (Section 5, ¶ 1). Rather, organizations should "have a process in place for using the results of the survey to improve the way you manage…. If you put the answers in an employee file, of if management doesn't actually act on the results, stop the process" (Rohland, 2000, Section 4, ¶ 7).

I would never actually suggest stopping the exit interview process, myself. But, I do feel that exit interviews are good for personnel relations. They offer the opportunity for the employer to clear up any misunderstandings and show concern for the employee's point of view (Field, 2000). "A well-done exit interview can generate good public relations for the organization: After all, the person who is leaving will carry stories about the company into the community" (Rohland, 2000, Section 2, ¶ 2). So, why not use this opportunity as a way to build bridges with people, because they are going to carry this information into both the community and industry with them. Really, how much is something like that worth? Smith (2001) says, "In 30 minutes, you can identify possible

lawsuits, smooth bad feelings, learn of problems with other employees, and discern whether your wages are competitive" (Section 6, ¶ 2). So why not use this crucial human resource strategy to the fullest potential, with the possibility of enhancing retention of your employees and decreasing unwanted turnover (Elsdon, 2000).

Recommendations

Based on the results section of this research paper, it is the author's recommendation that the Eagle River Fire Protection District (ERFPD) look further into implementing a more thorough exit interview process where the information gleaned from exiting employees is used to determine why members are choosing to leave employment, identify problem areas, and discover potential solutions leading to improved employee retention. The author of this research paper recommends that ERFPD set up a specific process for the resigning employees, which would include a through exit interview form of considerable length. This form should address, at a minimum the following areas:

- Employee's reason for leaving;

- What they enjoyed most/least about their job;

- Their opinions of their supervisor(s)/manager(s);

- Find out what the new place of employment offered that would be more satisfying than their current job;

- Ask if their leaving could have been prevented;

- What changes or suggestions would be made for improving their current organization;

- Whether they had received current performance appraisals;

- Their rating of the organization's benefits, insurance, retirement, pay, and opportunity for advancement;

- And ample opportunity for personal comments.

After the employee completes this process, an outside person, probably someone from the Human Resources department or Personnel, should conduct an interview with the employee to go over in detail the employee's comments. The information taken from this meeting should then be gathered, analyzed, shared with appropriate personnel to make necessary changes, and then filed away in a separate file for exit interviews. It can then be periodically reviewed and further analyzed for trends or problem areas.

It is the further recommendation of the author that ERFPD consider post-exit interviews. These are interviews held several months after termination, especially if the former employee is then securely established in a new job. This would alleviate some problems often encountered; such as when revealing the chief reason for leaving "would prejudice an employer if and when future references are desired" (Pigors & Myers, 1977, p.202). Also, any internal stress an exiting employee may be experiencing, might make it impossible to talk freely, even to a well-trained interviewer. This secondary exit interview could be conducted either by survey or telephone interview. The results could be very beneficial to ERFPD, because most likely people in this situation will open up more when safely away from the work environment, and may be eager to discuss the difficulties they had in their work setting.

Lastly, the author recommends for ERFPD to create a separate file system, away from the existing personnel files, for exit interview forms only. This could allow ERFPD's human resources personnel to periodically pull those forms in a non-biased and

anonymous manner. Underlying problem areas or repeatedly stated issues identified

through thorough analysis of the data, could potentially be fixed. What better way to

reduce turnover issues than attempting to fix the problem before another employee

becomes disgruntled about the same thing? The important thing to notice is that all

changes can be made with little to no financial impact to the author's organization. With

that said, the author of this research intends to supply this paper to the Fire Chief and all

the members of the Fire Board for review, with the hopes of future changes implemented

in ERFPD's exit interview process.

Future readers should be advised that they might wish to go beyond the scope of

this study. The reader must realize that each organization and its budget, personnel,

administrative specialties, and cost-benefit factors are all very different, and change with

each organization. What is administratively and economically feasible in one

organization may be an improbability, or even impossibility in another. Also, the

motivating factors for the author's organizational employees may in fact be vastly unlike

that of future reader's organizations, causing entirely different results for a similar study.

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Appendix A

Eagle River Fire Protection District Exit Interview Form

EMPLOYEE EXIT INTERVIEW QUESTIONNAIRE

1. Termination Type   Termination Date:
   If Un-Voluntary, skip to question 4.

2. Reason for leaving (check all that apply):

   Better Career Opportunity   Better Benefits   Better Salary
   Personal Reasons   Continuing Education   Medical Reasons
   Work not Challenging   Relocation
   Dissatisfaction w/ERFPD or Supervisor   Other:

3. Could anything have been done to change your decision to leave the company?

4. What did you like most about ERFPD?:

5. What benefits did you value most/least?

6. What did you like least about ERFPD?:

7. What could your supervisor have done to help you perform your job better?

8. Do you have any further suggestions or recommendations to make ERFPD a better working environment?:

9. Additional Comments:

10. Please note a permanent address for forwarding of your W-2.
    Mailing Address:
    City, State & Zip:

_____   _____

EMPLOYEE SIGNATURE   DATE

_____

SUPERVISOR SIGNATURE   DATE

_____

ADMINISTRATIVE MANAGER SIGNATURE   DATE

Appendix B

Feedback Form

Hello. My name is Shawn Bayouth, and I am Battalion Chief for the Eagle River Fire Protection District in Avon, Colorado. This feedback form is part of my Executive Fire Officer Applied Research Project and I would greatly appreciate any and all help that you might be willing to provide.

When responding, please remember that answering any or all questions is VOLUNTARY. Please follow the directions below when completing this form and attempt to return it to the address below within one week of receiving.

By completing and returning this feedback form, you have also agreed to your willingness to allow me to share the results of the survey with other interested parties. Please feel free to keep the enclosed $1.00 bill as small thanks for your time and prompt return of the form. Thank you for your assistance.

Shawn T. Bayouth.

Return feedback form to this address*: Shawn Bayouth*
P.O. Box 1165
159 Tanager Circle
Eagle, CO 81631-1165
(Thank you for only returning the following two pages)

EXIT INTERVIEW FEEDBACK FORM

1. Does your organization have a Human Resources Department or someone specifically assigned to those functions?   Please circle your answer.

   Yes **(15)**   No **(3)**

2. Does your organization perform exit interviews?   Please circle your answer.

    Yes **(18)**   No **(0)**

3. Who performs the exit interviews?   Pease circle your answer.

   - Human Resource Personnel **(9)**

   - Training Division Personnel **(0)**

   - Fire Chief **(10)**

   - Employee's Supervisor **(4)**

   - Other _____ **(3)**

     Operations Manager, General Manager, Town Government

   - N/A **(0)**

4. Is the exit interview information shared with anyone on the fire department other than the fire chief?   Please circle your answer.

   Yes (if so, whom?)_____

(13) Asst. Chief, Supervisor(s), Command Staff, HR, Board of Directors, Captains and above, Director of Public Safety, Deputy Chief, Fire Marshal, General and

Admin Manager, Senior Staff, Asst. Chief of Operations, Office Manager, District

Chief, Division Chief, Chief Officers

No **(4)**

N/A **(1) It's private information**

5. What happens to the information from the exit interviews? Please circle all that may apply.

- It is filed away in the employee's personnel file **(13)**

- It is filed away in a separate file for all exit interview forms **(4)**

- The information is shared with all senior staff **(8)**

- The forms are periodically reviewed and changes are recommended based on the

  information compiled **(4)**

- Other _____

  (3) Informal –nothing in writing, reviewed at time of exit to determine the

  issues and who or what they involve, reviewed by town manager – asst.

  manager – and dept. head

- N/A **(0)**

6. In your opinion, does your organization experience a problem with higher than normal

levels of employee turnover? Please circle your answer.

Yes **(0)**   No **(18)**

7. In your opinion, has performing exit interviews benefited your department in any

way? Please circle your answer.

(15) Yes (if so, how?)

_____

_____

Identify weaknesses or blind spots, determine possible personnel or management issues that may need attention, improve employee – volunteer/reserve relations, open eyes to potential problems and provides a course of how to fix them, good information for management, get the reason employee is changing jobs, use information to better the department, let's us know where we can improve – what we are doing well and where we are not performing well, only if they are honest, alert the district to potential problem areas, protects the district from claims of discrimination, gives the employee information about pension funds, it shows us which managers might need additional training, provides candid information which might otherwise be generally outside of management's ability to observe

(3) No (if not, any suggestions?)

_____

_____

No consistency with sending out the interviews and those sent ones did not return them, feedback is generally not used, would do better to do a formal – written exit interview for future reference – but only have one or two per year maximum at this time – which are usually retiring personnel – very few quit for another department

If possible, could you include a copy of your organization's exit interview questions or form when returning this survey?   _Thanks for your time and honest answers!_

**Items in bold indicate data and comments collected