

Running Head: LEADERSHIP FOR THE NEWLY PROMOTED

Executive Development

Leadership for the Newly Promoted Lieutenant

Bruce L. Evans

Norfolk Fire Rescue

Norfolk, VA

September 2006

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 loss of Norfolk Fire-Rescue (NFR) officers resulted in promotions. The problem was NFR lacked a leadership development course for officers, thus new lieutenants were often unprepared to lead employees. The purpose of the research was to identify skills and traits of leadership for development of a leadership course for NFR. Descriptive research was used to answer three questions: (1) What are the skills and traits of a first line supervisor, (2) what lieutenant leadership skills and traits are being required by other fire departments, (3) what leadership skills and traits do NFR administration expect of lieutenants? Two feedback forms and an interview with the NFR Fire Chief were conducted. NFR would benefit by developing a leadership development course for new lieutenants.

Table of Contents

	Page
Certification Statement	2
Abstract	3
Table of Contents	4
Introduction	5
Background and Significance	7
Literature Review	10
Procedures	16
Results	19
Discussion	23
Recommendations	27
References	29
 Appendices	
Appendix A: Civilian Skills and Leadership Feedback Form	31
Appendix B: Other Fire Department Skills and Leadership Feedback Form	33
 Table of Figures	
Figure 1	20
Figure 2	21

Norfolk Fire-Rescue (NFR) has long been praised by neighboring fire departments for the reputation of having street-smart and seasoned fire officers. Many firefighters and officers in the Hampton Roads region admire the on-the-job experience that can be gained from working in a densely populated urban setting. The various aspects of the city including building construction, population, age of the city, and the call volume attract thousands of applicants to NFR. Even today, NFR continues to maintain a high call volume and a large number of working fires. Also, working in a metro-size department like NFR comes with all the organizational and leadership challenges that accompany a department of similar size and scope. The lieutenants of NFR face many leadership challenges that other fire officers only read about in trade journals. The lieutenants of NFR are expected to possess and convey leadership abilities from their position within the organization.

A merger of the fire department and the emergency medical service (EMS) provider, two retirement incentives, and normal attrition has created a problem that NFR has never faced in its 134-year history. Over the past ten years, NFR has seen the turnover of approximately one third of the department with many of these personnel in positions of leadership. The problem is NFR lacks a leadership development course for the rank of lieutenant, thus newly promoted lieutenants are often unprepared to lead subordinate employees. The promotions of newer and less experienced firefighters to lieutenant result in a leadership void within the rank of lieutenant. As newly promoted leaders, the lieutenants often do not possess the skills and traits required to tackle highly sensitive and important personnel issues related to subordinate employees. Also, command presence and the ability to make rapid decisions on the emergency scene suffer, which in turn lead to confidence issues for the newly promoted officer. Furthermore, the lieutenants

lack the ability to build cohesive teams that are necessary both on and off of the emergency scene.

Currently, NFR firefighters are required to have four years of service, Emergency Medical Technician – Enhanced (EMT-E) or higher, and be certified to drive and act as a company officer in order to be eligible for the lieutenant’s promotional process. Once promoted, the new lieutenants are required to obtain the certification of Fire Officer I, a program offered and taught by the Virginia Department of Fire Programs (VDFP) within one year of promotion. The program follows the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) 1021 Standard for Fire Officer Professional Qualifications. However, the teaching of NFPA 1021 alone is not enough, thus lieutenants are forced to navigate unfamiliar and complex issues on their own. The problem is compounded when incumbent lieutenants are promoted to captain and the leadership void continues to grow and spread further in the organization.

In the past, many lieutenants and captains came to the fire service with prior military service that instilled leadership skills and traits required by the military. In many cases, the prior experience supplanted the need for formal leadership training prior to promotion. Furthermore, the experience of veteran lieutenants and captains was passed on to newly promoted lieutenants; therefore mentoring took the place of a formal leadership development course for officers.

The purpose of this research was to identify skills and traits for the development of a formal leadership course for NFR lieutenants. The course is essential in preparing firefighters for the transition to a leadership role at the rank of lieutenant. Without proper development, NFR is setting new lieutenants up for failure and ignoring a problem that exists within the organization. Descriptive research was used to answer three questions: (1) What are the skills and traits of a first line supervisor, (2) what lieutenant leadership skills and traits are being required by other

fire departments, (3) what leadership skills and traits do NFR administration expect of lieutenants? With the influx of a diverse workforce and the demands required of the 21st century fire service, it is imperative that the leadership is prepared to cultivate this workforce. Leadership skills and traits are an essential part of the process. The NFR lieutenants must be provided with formal leadership training in order to rise to the overwhelming challenges presented and to continue to provide quality service to its internal and external customers.

Background and Significance

In 1871, the government leaders of Norfolk, Virginia recognized the need to form a career fire department. In December of that year, the Norfolk Fire Department (NFD) was established by city charter and became the third career fire department in the nation. The 134 years since have produced many changes in the city, the fire department, and the skills required of its leaders.

The most notable change occurred on April 9, 1991 when the NFD merged with Paramedical Rescue Services (PRS), the city's EMS provider. The joining of departments produced, Norfolk Fire and Paramedical Services (NFPS), a full-service fire based EMS department. The fusion was very difficult for both agencies, especially within the officer ranks. The supervisors from PRS were placed in equivalent positions of leadership within the new department. Unfortunately, in many cases the new officers lacked emergency scene or leadership experience. While they were required to attend and successfully pass a state certified Firefighter I and II program, through the VDFP, the supervisors from PRS did not have the leadership abilities and valuable street experience in fire ground operations that NFD officers had gained from practical work experience.

In 2001, the department was formally renamed to Norfolk Fire-Rescue (NFR), which more closely symbolized the department's core mission and purpose. NFR is responsible for full-service fire based EMS delivery within sixty-two square miles of dense urban environment. The department operates fourteen stations from four battalions, which comprise 14 engines, 7 ladders, 2 heavy rescues, and 11 advanced life support (ALS) medic units. Furthermore, NFR provides fire prevention and investigation services, a training facility, public affairs bureau, occupational health and safety bureau, special operations bureau, and administrative services. The department provides these services through 502 highly capable and committed employees. The department responds to approximately 40,000 emergency calls annually and protects 241,000 citizens who call Norfolk home. The City of Norfolk continues to grow and remains an active hub in the eastern region of Virginia with numerous large development projects on the horizon. Currently, two 30-story buildings are under construction in the downtown area, which is undergoing extensive redevelopment that will surely challenge the leadership of NFR in the future. The population is consistently increasing with a projection to go beyond 300,000 within the next ten years. With constant changes in the fire service, a growing population and city, the officers of NFR will have to rise to new challenges and meet the expectations of residents, as they have for over a century. These challenges will need to be dealt with by skilled, trained and motivated leaders at the company level.

Over the years, NFR has enjoyed a relatively low turnover rate in the officer ranks as a result of retirements. However, in 1996 the city offered a retirement incentive to employees who were eligible and the result was the retirement of 62 employees, of which, 27 were officers. Again in 2005, the city offered employees a retirement incentive, the Public Safety Retirement

Enhancement Program (PSREP) that gave employees with 25 years or more service an option to increase their retirement percentage, by 5 to 15 percent, if they retired within a designated 3-month period. Again, the result was the loss of 48 employees including 11 officers. The retirement incentives coupled with the merging of the departments forced many new promotions that resulted in officers lacking the leadership qualifications necessary for the position with which they held. Moreover, the natural attrition rate has added to the already strained situation for NFR. As a result, newly promoted officers were then promoted to higher ranks that required even more leadership ability they did not possess. The void of leadership has manifested in the inability of officers to lead at emergency scenes and in the work environment. The compounding factors have led to problems of the officer being the “firefighter in the cab” (E. L. Senter Jr., personal communication, April 24, 2006), rather than the leader of a team. Furthermore, the lack of leadership manifests itself with problems in the station, SOP interpretation, team building, training, morale and social issues, and the overall harmony of the work place. In many instances, the officers on the fire ground have waited for instructions from senior officers or consulted firefighters, rather than taking initiative for actions required of the incident. The lack of leadership results in chaotic operations, a lack of trust by firefighters, and frustration throughout the organization. If the problem of leadership is not addressed through leadership development, the problem will continue to spread throughout the organization.

The need for leadership development is paramount as experienced and knowledgeable leaders leave the workforce. There are numerous commercially available leadership programs offered by private businesses. Programs such as the Executive Fire Officer Program (EFOP), through the National Fire Academy (NFA), have recognized the need for leadership development within the fire service. The Executive Development (ED) course is designed with an “emphasis

on leadership.” (EFOP Operational Policies and Procedures, p. I-3) Furthermore, the fire service, armed with good leadership skills and traits can assist the United States Fire Administration (USFA) to reach one of its operational objectives, “to reduce the loss of life from fire of firefighters.” (p. II-2) Norfolk Fire-Rescue needs to identify the skills and traits desired in their leaders and develop a formal leadership development course for newly promoted lieutenants.

Literature Review

Leadership skills and traits have been around and debated for as long as one can search. The ability to make decisions based on a situation is nothing new and is not solely a problem for the fire service. Leadership skills and traits are displayed daily in the workplace by supervisors and subordinates alike. Leadership is often a product of a situation, such as, the many acts of leadership shown during the events of September 11, 2001, the many wars and conflicts of the past, and the hurricanes that struck the Gulf Coast in 2005. However, the day-to-day functions of a leader are just as important as during an emergency. The need to prepare, train, and develop future leaders is as important as having leaders currently in place within an organization. There is an abundance of literature available concerning leadership and development of employees. A search of the public library revealed numerous books about leadership and the effect it has on individuals and organizations. A search of the Internet uncovered thousands of websites dedicated to the issue of leadership and the skills and traits required of a leader. Also, there are countless magazine and journal articles, books, and a vast number of consulting firms who specialize in offering leadership based training through seminars and programs. The literature on leadership ranges from children’s books to Fortune 500 companies and best sellers by prominent leadership experts.

In the children's book *Leadership*, Hirschmann (2003) describes a leader as being a visionary with the ability to get work done through others. In addition, Hirschmann, states that leaders possess many skills and traits that can be inherited or learned. Hirschmann identified being decisive, a good communicator, flexible, and consistent as useful skills of a leader. Having a good attitude, respect of others, and showing commitment were good traits of a leader as well. Moreover, Hirschmann describes taking responsibility for your actions and knowing what your limitations are, as being an essential part of leadership. Similarly, Bethel (1990) describes 12 qualities that all leaders have and suggests these qualities exist in all humans to some extent. Bethel describes leadership as the act of influencing others to follow your actions and says that leadership is a continuous process of refining skills and abilities that build over time.

In contrast Feiner (2004), a Columbia University School of Business professor describes a leader as one who can unite and lead a group versus being a great individual. Feiner equates leadership to an iceberg and describes how the bulk of the work is accomplished below the surface and without being noticed by most people. Feiner believes that leadership is more about managing relationships with others, than focusing attention on one's personal development. Additionally, Feiner states that through small dealings with individuals, the larger group relationship will become stronger and the group will succeed in its goals. He further states technical skills are important, but are only an "admission to the leadership game." (p. 14) Feiner states that through direct personal contact and communication with the members of a group, a developed team will be the product. He further states that over-communicating will serve as re-enforcement of the group's vision and that a developed team will be more effective than a team with a knowledgeable leader and followers.

Effective Supervisory Practices (2005) describes the first-line supervisor as being essential to an organizations success or failure. The supervisor accomplishes this through providing a stable work environment and building relationships with their team members. The personal traits of the supervisor are not as important as the behaviors expressed by the supervisor. Furthermore, the act of leadership would not be required without followers, thus leadership can only be accomplished if the parties are committed to a common goal.

Similarly, Gubman (2003) relates business to professional sports and points out many areas alike in leadership. In most instances, Gubman compared business situations to the situations professional coaches found themselves in during their careers. Gubman describes that attracting followers should be the goal of a leader. Furthermore, a leader will make the goals of the organization known, but should focus attention on the individual's involved. Moreover, further attention should be focused on the "best and brightest to help them grow into future leaders." (p. 84)

The need for development of employees is paramount to the success of any organization. If any business or organization is to thrive in today's world, the organization must devote time, money, and effort to the development of its employees. The development process should begin with the personal skills and traits the employee exhibits daily.

Hawley (2003) describes that the development of employees should focus on the experiences related to the employee's personal skills, traits, and abilities. Hawley states that many businesses and employers devote little time to the development of their employees for a variety of reasons. However, Hawley continues to say that organizations that provide development to employees will see many positives for the organization as a result of the process.

Likewise, Gubman (2003) states that many sports franchises have built dynasties through the development process. Gubman equates today's employee to a free agent in sports and states that employees who are not developed will not remain with the organization. Furthermore, a strong foundation for growth begins with development of certain employees. The United States Marine Corp (USMC) understands the need for leadership and leadership development. Freedman (2000) points out that the USMC has leadership development at each of its seven ranks. Furthermore, by developing leaders and decision-makers at lower levels, the authority is decentralized within the organization. This conscious decision by the USMC requires a strong leadership development program and forces the corp to look at the skills of the individuals entrusted with this authority.

Conte (2006), states the need for holding onto institutional knowledge is "taking on a new sense of urgency" (p. 24) and states that many localities just starting to experience this are unfamiliar with how to deal with the new dilemma. Conte cites several reasons for loss of experience including privatizing of services and retirement initiatives, designed to save money, as contributing to the erosion of invaluable experience and knowledge. Conte explains that not all knowledge is learned from a book and most of the time experience cannot be taught. Conte suggests that the idea of sharing information and work will reduce the impact of losing institutional knowledge. Furthermore, leaders need to display these work principles so that subordinates will see the benefits.

Cohn, Khurana, and Reeves (2005), state that leadership development should be a primary focus of senior management and not left to human resource departments or the boss. If not addressed, the attrition process will erode the organization of potential leaders and could result in promotions of unprepared personnel, or the hiring of executives from outside of the

organization. By taking ownership of the development process, senior management can begin to shape an identity for their company, which will be passed on to future leaders and will help to sustain the legacy of the company. A strong identity will serve to attract future leaders and continue to reinforce the values of the company. Furthermore, the development process will broaden the skills of future leaders by exposing them to all aspects of the company, which in turn will create a better knowledge of the company's internal workings.

The United States Office of Personnel Management (OPM) conducted a study during fiscal year 2001 and found that little time was devoted to leadership development in the federal workforce. The OPM (2001) described that little had changed following previous studies in 1989, 1992, and 1999. The study found that most individuals had good technical knowledge, but did not have the skills and abilities to lead a team of people. Also, most agencies were still not developing personnel for future leadership positions within the federal government. Furthermore, the OPM described a shrinking experienced supervisor pool. The OPM cited that from "September 1993 to March 1999 the number of supervisors and managers declined from 268,498 to 195,900." (p. 3) Furthermore, OPM cited, "only 4 of the 20 agencies surveyed have formal internal leadership development programs that prepare employees to become first-level supervisors." (p. 7)

Leadership skills and traits are important to the fire service and its officers also. Cunningham (2002) describes many qualities that go into making a fire service officer including humor, stamina, courage, and enthusiasm. However, the most notable characteristic is integrity. Cunningham describes integrity as fundamental to the "three R's; Respect for self; Respect for others; and Responsibility for all your actions" (§ 4). Cunningham believes integrity is important

for many reasons, such as the image an officer portrays in their actions, loyalty to the organization, respect, and trust.

The need for leadership development is essential to the fire service. The loss of experience and knowledge is affecting NFR and the entire fire service. Sager (2005) describes the need for development of incident commanders as imperative. The loss of experience and leadership is significantly noticed during incident operations. Sager equates the development process as a “passing of the baton” (§ 1); the young leaders will inherit this knowledge and are expected to pass it on to the next generation of incident commanders. Sager further states that fire chiefs must address this problem as it requires a long-term commitment to develop leaders and a plan for the succession of current leadership. The process should be based upon an assessment of individual needs of the next generation of leaders and their incident command capabilities. Sager continues to describe that prior to losing this valuable knowledge base, the younger leaders need to “go chiefing” (§ 20) with a more experienced incident commander.

A personal interview with NFR Fire Chief Edward L. Senter Jr. (personal communication, July 24, 2006) revealed that leadership is a concern within NFR. Senter described problems with direction, expectation, misunderstanding of policies, and the organization not cultivating young leaders as some of the major issues of not having a formal leadership development program. Also, Senter acknowledged that numerous promotions within the last ten years have exacerbated the leadership dilemma. Furthermore, Senter recognizes that without a formal leadership development program young officers tend to “fall in with the group around the station” (personal communication, July 24, 2006) instead of being the leader, which leads to ineffective supervision during emergency incidents. Additionally, Senter agreed that NFR would need to develop future leadership, especially at the rank of lieutenant. Senter desires

NFR lieutenants to display the skills and traits of honesty, listening, good communication, commitment, strong work ethic, and to lead by example. Moreover, Senter describes leadership as a continuous process that requires life-long learning and a commitment to the profession. With a formal leadership program in place, Senter envisions a leader better prepared for a supervisory role, better understanding of the responsibility and authority of the position, enhanced growth throughout the organization, and leaders who embrace change and continuously promote teamwork.

The literature review clearly identifies skills and traits of leadership as important. Clearly, there are no universal set of skills and traits that all leaders can possess for any given position. The need to continuously evaluate these skills and traits and to prepare future leaders is vital to any organization. As an organization changes, so must the skills, traits, and abilities of its leadership. As a changing organization, NFR must continue to meet the demands of its service delivery needs, customers, and the advances in technology and the world. Norfolk Fire-Rescue needs to identify, develop and cultivate strong leaders in order to meet immediate and future challenges it will face. By studying the skills and traits desired in supervisors from civilian and fire agencies, NFR can begin to develop a formal leadership program and address a problem that already exists and possibly avoid a future crisis in leadership.

Procedures

A search of the public library revealed numerous books, magazine articles, and journals devoted to leadership. Additionally, a search of trade journals and books was conducted at NFR's library. The Internet was searched and revealed thousands of websites dedicated to private companies offering training in leadership and organizational development. Furthermore,

a search of the Learning Resource Center (LRC) at the NFA found many EFOP research papers related to leadership development and succession planning.

The first research question was answered using an electronic feedback form. The feedback form was sent to ten department directors within the City of Norfolk. The purpose of this form was to answer the questions: (1) does your department have a leadership development program, (2) are you using any commercially produced programs or did you develop your own, (3) do you plan to develop a leadership program, (4) how long is the program and how long has it been in place, (5) has the program helped, (6) what skills and traits are required of a first line supervisor, and (7) what are the constraints to a development program? All of the questions were closed-ended except when asking about the skills and traits required of a supervisor; this question allowed the respondents to mark all answers that applied. The following departments were solicited for feedback: Norfolk Public Schools, Utilities, Public Works, Human Resources, Human Services, Police, Planning, Recreation, Parks & Open Spaces, Information Technology, and Emergency Management. The form was sent to the respondents who were given three weeks to complete the feedback form and electronically return it upon completion. The data was compiled and analyzed to reveal what skills and traits are required of a first line supervisor by civilian agencies. The data was converted to percentages and displayed in written and visual form. A copy of the feedback form is included as Appendix A.

Next, a feedback form was mailed to 100 fire departments throughout the United States. The departments were selected from the *National Directory of Fire Chiefs and EMS Administrators*. Two departments were selected from each state in order to gain a broad perspective from throughout the country. The departments chosen were based on similar size and scope of work to NFR. The feedback form included 15 questions relating to a leadership

development program, skills and traits desired in their leaders, and statistical data about the department. Again, the questions were closed-ended, but did allow for multiple responses on the skills and traits section of the feedback form. The departments were given approximately one month to complete the feedback form and return it in the envelope provided. The data was compiled and analyzed to reveal what skills and traits other fire departments desire in their lieutenants or lowest level of supervision. The data was converted to percentages and displayed in written and visual form. A copy of the feedback form is included as Appendix B.

Finally, a personal interview was conducted with NFR Fire Chief Edward L. Senter Jr. on July 24, 2006. The purpose of the interview was to answer the final research question; what skills and traits does NFR administration expect of a lieutenant? The interview was conducted in the chief's office and scheduled through his assistant at a date and time agreed to by the chief. The interview was scheduled for one hour and was recorded with the chief's permission. In the interview the following questions were asked: (1) what problems does NFR face due to the lack of a formal leadership development program, (2) what skills and traits do you believe are necessary for NFR lieutenants, (3) what benefits would you expect from a leadership development program, and (4) is it your intention to develop a leadership development program for officers? In addition to these questions, the chief elaborated on follow up questions as needed and shared his general philosophy on leadership and personal development.

There were several limitations in the research. First, three of the feedback forms were incorrectly addressed and returned "undeliverable" by the postal service. Of the remaining feedback forms mailed to fire departments 73% were returned; therefore the intended audience was not fully accounted for in the results. Also, Delaware only had one department of similar size and scope to NFR; therefore the District of Columbia Fire & Rescue was substituted for one

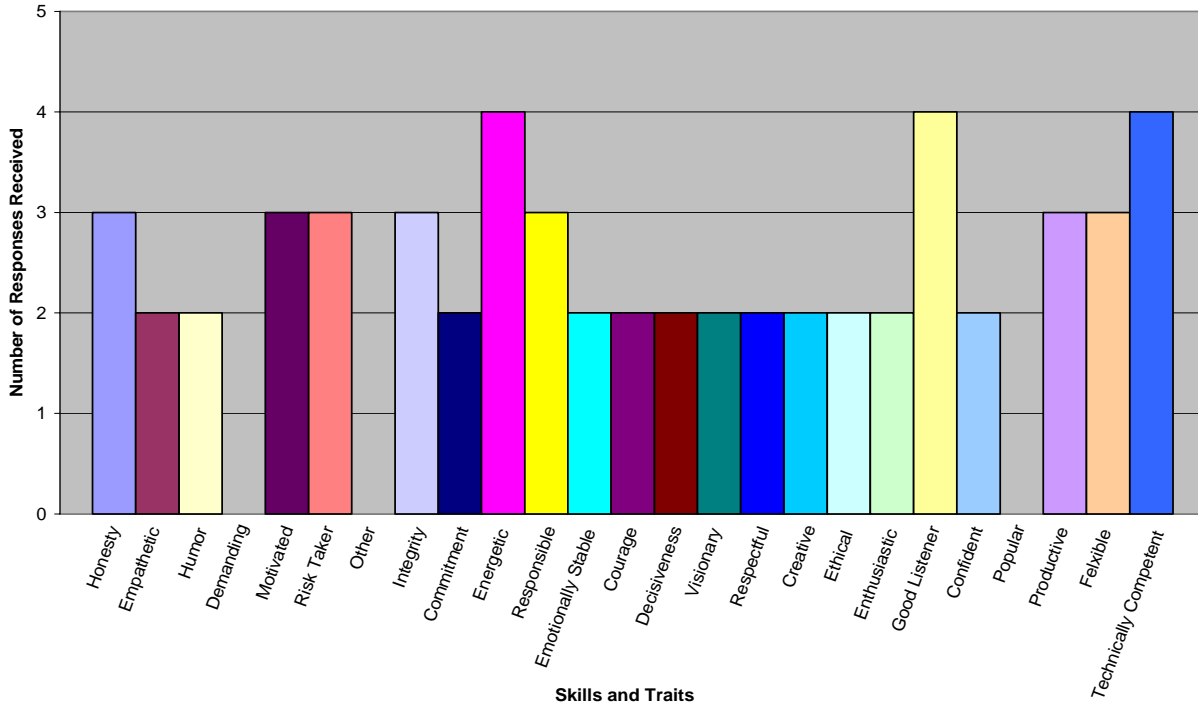
of the departments from Delaware. Next, of the 10 feedback forms electronically sent to department directors only 5 or 50% were returned. Thus, the information gained from civilian agencies was limited. A broader perspective could be gained from civilian agencies, but the time constraint of the research project was limiting. Finally, the personal interview with Chief Senter was scheduled for one hour, and lasted approximately an hour and a half.

Results

The research revealed that most fire departments and civilian agencies desire certain leadership skills and traits in their supervisors and fire officers. Many of the skills and traits, such as being energetic, technically competent, and a good listener were selected by civilian and fire agencies. The results identify that a wide range of skills and traits are necessary for all leaders.

As shown in Figure 1, the civilian agency participants selected no skill or trait unanimously. However, the skills and traits of energetic, technically competent, and a good listener were foremost to civilian agencies. The respondents ranked motivated, risk taking, integrity, responsible, productive, and flexible as equally desirable by civilian agencies. Next, civilian agencies reported empathy, humor, commitment, emotionally stable, courageous, decisive, respectful, creative, ethical, enthusiastic, confident, and a visionary as desirable skills also. Finally, none of the respondents desired their first line supervisors to be demanding or popular and no "other" skills or traits were identified by civilian agencies responding to the feedback form.

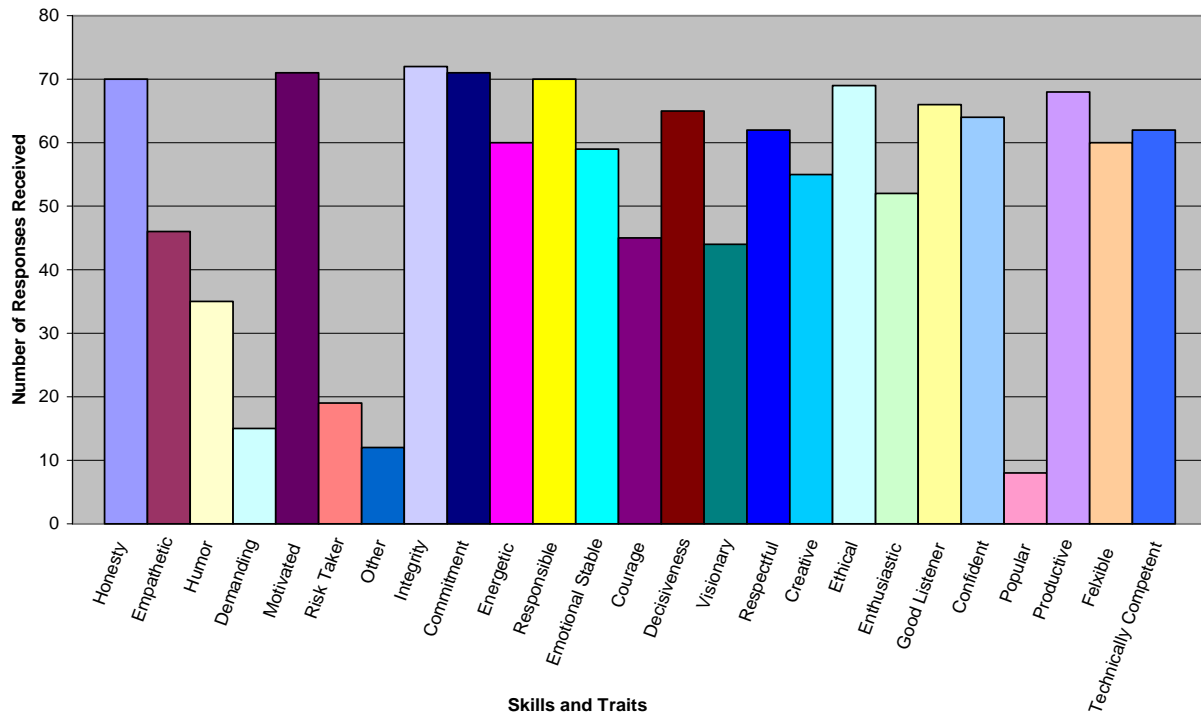
Figure 1 Skills and traits desired by civilian agencies



As shown in Figure 2, all of the skills and traits identified in the feedback form were selected as being desirable in a first line supervisor by fire departments. Integrity was identified as the most desirable skill or trait relating to leadership. The skills and traits of being motivated, committed, responsible, honest, ethical and productive followed closely behind integrity. Next, the participants desire a supervisor to be a good listener, decisive, confident, and technically competent. The remaining skills and traits were identified as desirable, but did not rank in the top ten choices by fire departments. Those skills and traits included empathy, humor, demanding, risk taker, energetic, emotionally stable, courageous, being a visionary, respectful, creative, enthusiastic, and flexible. The category of “other” was chosen by 12 departments and included the responses of having a positive outlook, being innovative, and being a culturally diverse

person as desirable in a leader. Finally, the feedback form identified being popular as the least desirable skill or trait in a first line fire department supervisor.

Figure 2 Skills and traits desired by other fire departments



An interview with NFR’s Chief Senter revealed that lieutenants are expected to display the skills and traits of integrity, honesty, commitment, and flexibility. Additionally, lieutenants should be good communicators and listeners, display a strong work ethic, exercise good decision making skills, and lead by example. Also, Chief Senter acknowledged that being popular was an added benefit, but not required. The chief added that embracing change, creating a fair and equitable atmosphere with the citizens and the department best interest in mind was desirable in lieutenants. Finally, the chief recognized that being able to “stand out front” (E.L. Senter, personal communication, July 24, 2006) in the face of adversity is highly desirable in leaders.

Additional information was gained from the feedback forms. The feedback revealed most agencies responding either have a program or plan to develop a leadership development program

in the future. The research shows that 54.2% of fire departments and 60% of civilian agencies have a leadership development program in place. However, 44.4% of fire departments and 40% of the civilian agencies do not have a program in place; 1.4% of fire department respondents failed to answer the question. The research revealed that medium to large size fire departments are more likely to have a program in place compared to smaller departments. Of the departments reporting not having a program, 51.4% plan to develop and implement a leadership development program in the future; only 16.7% do not and 31.9% were unsure at the time. The reasons noted for not having a program in place were no need, budgetary issues, time constraints, staffing issues, and no curriculum available for the course. However, these answers only account for a small portion of the respondents, because 76.4% did not answer the question. On the other hand, 80% of civilian agencies plan to develop a leadership program. Of the fire departments with programs in place, 52% of them developed their own program and 75% do not use any of the leadership assessment tools, such as Meyers-Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI), Covey's 7-Habits, Blanchard's Situational Leadership (BSL), or the Leading Educating, and Developing program (LEAD). However, the civilian agencies acknowledged that 80% of them developed their own program and all respondents are using programs like MBTI, BSL, and LEAD. When asked about length of the program, the answers varied from less than one week to greater than six weeks. The average length for fire department leadership programs was 2-4 weeks 19.4% of the time and one week 80% of the time for civilian agencies. When forced to pick a summarizing statement about a desired type of leader, 80% of the time both fire departments and civilian agencies, chose a leader who may lack some personal development, but was a good team builder, over a well developed all knowing individual.

Discussion

Leadership is important to any business, organization, or fire department. The research revealed that many skills and traits are desired of supervisors, and to be a successful leader requires the use of various skills and traits. Feiner (2004) agrees, “one thing that makes leadership such a daunting proposition for most of us is the range of skills required.” (p. 16) Many of the skills and traits necessary for leadership can be inherited from our parents and grandparents. However, Hirschmann (2003) disagrees with the concept of inherited skills and states “although leadership comes naturally to some people, anyone can learn how to be a good leader. Knowing what makes someone a leader is the first step in this process.” (p. 5) A single skill or trait is not sufficient for any leader. Bethel (1990) agrees by saying “there are twelve common denominators—twelve qualities—that all leaders possess.” (p. 11) Conversely, the research identified 25 skills and traits that fire departments and civilian agencies deem necessary for their supervisors. There are probably more skills and traits that a supervisor may need in order to lead. Feiner (2004) agrees saying “there aren’t seven laws or ten commandments: Leadership simply isn’t that simple.” (p. 12) However, integrity was a trait that stood out as necessary for fire officers. Cunningham (2002) agrees, “integrity is the most important of all qualities that a fire officer must possess.” (p. 7) Furthermore, “the first reason for acting with integrity is that subordinates are constantly observing the lead figure.” (p. 1) When comparing sports and business, Gubman (2003) acknowledges the role that integrity plays in both:

When I ask people what traits they admire most in leaders, the first thing they say is integrity. There are many other traits that people admire in their leaders, but integrity appears to be the foundation—courage, confidence, and caring all flow from it. (p. 19)

Integrity alone will not sustain a leader. Other skills and traits, such as honesty, communication, ethics, commitment, and decision-making are just as vital for success. Cunningham (2002) states “officers must always conduct themselves with the utmost of honesty at all times.” (p. 4)

Likewise, Gubman (2003) agrees, “if people are going to follow your lead, they expect you to act honestly and ethically.” (p. 20) Ethics are a vital part of any organization’s leadership. Freedman (2000) acknowledges that Marines have a strong bond to ethics:

The Corps would frown on any Marine who claimed to embody flawlessly all of its values. But if every Marine is expected to fall a bit short in one area or another now and then, the one type of slip for which there is almost no tolerance is unethical behavior. (p. 152)

In addition, Bethel (1990) states “people still look for ethical standards in their leaders. And leaders need strong ethics to guide them in their actions and decisions.” (p. 61)

Communications was identified as an important part of being a leader. The ability to express desires, expectations, and ideas are vital to achieving goals. Chief Senter admitted, “open communications are still one of the biggest challenges NFR is faced with.” (E.L. Senter, personal communication, July 24, 2006) Similarly, listening is equally a part of being a good communicator. Freedman (2000) agrees, “Marine managers make a point of listening carefully to what their people are saying, whether it’s critical or not.” (p. 137)

Commitment is imperative to any organization. Senter acknowledged, that commitment to “yourself, the profession, and the organization” (E.L. Senter, personal communication, July 24, 2006) is necessary for a leader. Feiner (2004) takes commitment further than the leader and applies commitment to all of the organization’s employees. Feiner states commitment is equally important to them as well:

If a leader wants a subordinate to be committed to the success of the leader and the leader's organization, then the leader must be committed to the subordinate—to his or her growth and development, and to what's important to him or her both inside and outside the office. (p. 49)

Similarly, decision-making is a skill that all fire officers and leaders must have. The ability to make decisions is critical in emergency and non-emergency situations. Hirschmann (2003) articulates the need for decisiveness:

Being decisive means being able to make timely decisions. Making decisions is a big part of leadership. Leaders must be able to decide what to do and to stick to their decisions. They must also take responsibility for the consequences of their decisions. (p. 14)

Senter recognized that “well informed decision-making skills” (E.L. Senter, personal communication, July 24, 2006) are vital at the rank of lieutenant. In contrast, the inability to make decisions can be costly to a leader and an organization. Bethel (1990) explains by saying, “standing in the shadow of decision is regret—regret over things not done, needs not met, opportunities missed, and experiences bypassed.” (p. 151) Also, “when we are indecisive we forfeit everyone's future and we waste time, energy, talent, money, and opportunity.” (p. 149)

The research identified team-building skills as essential to all leaders. The ability to achieve success through others is at the core of leadership. Hirschmann (2003) says, “leaders understand how to direct a team so each member is working towards a common goal.” (p. 4) Feiner (2004) acknowledged that a leader couldn't solve all the problems alone:

If we examine the enormity of the challenge facing the modern leader, it becomes clear that individual leadership is simply not feasible. The world is far too complex for a man or woman to be able to single-handedly resolve the problems of the day. (p. 9)

Bethel (1990) agrees, “more than any other leadership skill, team building depends on and draws from all of the other qualities.” (p. 215) Likewise, Chief Senter stated “teamwork” (E.L. Senter, personal communication, July 24, 2006) is vital at the lieutenant’s level.

Finally, the research exposed that along with the necessary skills and traits of leadership comes a development process. OPM (2001) concurs, “unprepared or untrained leaders can damage employee morale and lower productivity.” (p. 1) Hawley (2003) acknowledges, “the development process focuses on developing the employee’s skills, traits, abilities, and experiences.” (p. 26) Gubman (2003) concurs, “start by creating a strong foundation of talent from within.” (p.80) Additionally, a development process will help any organization deal with problems. Hawley (2003) states, “heading off problems by developing star performers is by far the best strategy for creating stellar teams and high-performing companies.” (p. 33) However, development of employees is a long-term process and must change with the organization. Bethel (1990) states, “leadership is not something you learn once and for all. It is an ever-evolving pattern of skills, talents, and ideas that grow and change as you do.” (p. 12) The development process should not be confined to a classroom. “It’s the daily interactions that a subordinate has with his or her boss that presents the best opportunity for skill development.” (Feiner, P. 66) Cohn et al. (2005) found, “it is part of a line manager’s job to recognize his subordinates’ developmental needs.” (p. 67)

The research revealed that many fire departments are developing future leaders and officers. However, NFR and many others still do not have a formal leadership development program in place. Additionally, most survey participants do not use commercially produced products or human resource departments for the development of leaders. NFR should take a proactive approach towards developing a program tailored to meet the needs of the department. Also, the skills and traits identified within the research are consistent with the desires of NFR administration, thus eliminating the need for further research concerning the skills and traits required of a leader. The research findings are also consistent with the core values established by NFR administration.

If NFR does not address the problem of leadership development, the problems with newly promoted NFR lieutenants will continue to go unchecked. Moreover, the expectations of new lieutenants will remain unknown and the issues confronting NFR leadership will remain unresolved. NFR must act proactively and aggressively in identifying and developing up and coming leaders. NFR cannot wait for future leaders to self-develop; NFR must begin this process now to ensure success. The department must devote time, resources, and funding to the development of current and future leadership.

Recommendations

Norfolk Fire-Rescue needs a leadership development program. The immediate need is at the lieutenant rank and should be the initial focus of the program. However, the development should not stop at lieutenant and should continue at all ranks. The program should focus on the skills and traits identified within the research and should be tailored to meet the needs of individuals at each rank. The program should remain consistent with the core values of NFR. Furthermore, the program should focus on team building, interpersonal skills development,

conflict resolution, employment law, administrative functions, and leadership for both emergency and non-emergency situations. Moreover, the program should center on leadership and the ability to deal with complex, sensitive, and social issues that today's supervisors encounter. A committee of executive level officers should be formed to determine a 40-hour curriculum. The course should be delivered to all newly promoted lieutenants first, and then to incumbent lieutenants, until all have completed the program. In addition, the committee must monitor and evaluate the program's efficacy. The curriculum must be able to adapt with the changing needs of NFR leadership. To keep pace with changing needs, a strong performance measurement system will need to be researched and implemented. The relationship between leadership development and performance measurement will require further research. In the future, the leadership program should be implemented as a requirement for promotion and considered for integration into NFR's Master Firefighter Program. Finally, a formal succession plan for NFR needs to be researched and developed. The leadership development program and succession plan will help to identify a pool of leaders for the continued success of NFR.

References

- Bethel, S.M. (1990). *Making a difference: twelve qualities that make you a leader*. New York, NY: G.P. Putnam's Sons.
- Cohn, J.M., Khurana, R., & Reeves, L. (2005, October). Growing talent as if your business depends on it. *Harvard Business Review*, 62-70.
- Conte, C. (2006). Expert exodus. *Governing*, 19, 22-28.
- Cunningham, T.M. (2002). *Leadership 101: Integrity*. WithTheCommand.com. Retrieved April 24, 2006 from <http://www.withecommand.com/2002-Aug/MD-TMC-leader-integ101.html>
- Feiner, M. (2004). *The finer points of leadership: the fifty basic laws that will make people want to perform better for you*. NY: Warner Business
- Freedman, D.H. (2000). *Corps business: the 30 management principles of the U.S. Marines*. New York, NY: Harper Collins.
- Gubman, E. (2003). *The engaging leader: winning with today's free agent workforce*. Chicago, IL: Dearborn Trade.
- Hawley, C.F. (2003). *201 ways to turn any employee into a star performer*. New York, NY: McGraw-Hill.
- Hirschman, K. (2003). *Leadership*. Chicago: Raintree
- International City/County Management Association 4th edition (2005). *Effective Supervisory Practices: Better results through teamwork*. Washington, Edited by Wrighton, S.
- Sager, B. (2005, December). Fireground succession. *Fire Chief*, Retrieved on July 21, 2006, from http://firechief.com/management/firefighting_fireground_succession/

United States Department of Homeland Security, Federal Emergency Management Agency,

United States Fire Administration, National Fire Academy (2003). *Executive fire officer program, operational policies and procedures applied research guidelines*. Emmitsburg,

MD: Author.

United States Office of Personnel Management, Office of Merit Systems Oversight and

Effectiveness. (January 2001). *Supervisors in the federal government: a wake up call*.

Retrieved July 22, 2006, from <http://www.opm.gov/studies/sups.pdf>

LEADERSHIP SKILLS AND TRAITS FEEDBACK FORM

This feedback form is part of an Executive Fire Officer (EFO) research project, through the National Fire Academy (NFA). All participation is voluntary.

1. Does your department have a leadership development course for first line supervisors?

- Yes No

2. Are you using any of the following leadership assessment tools? (Check all that apply)

- Meyers-Briggs Leading, Educating, and Developing
 Covey's 7 Habits Blanchard's Situational Leadership
 Other (Please specify) _____

3. Do you plan to develop and implement a leadership development program for supervisors?

- Yes No (Go to question #8)

4. Did you design your own leadership development course?

- Yes No

5. How long is your leadership development course?

- < 1 week 1 week >1week
 2-4 weeks 4-6 weeks > 6 weeks

6. How long has your department used a leadership development program?

- < 1 year 2-4 years > 5 years

7. Do you feel the program is helping your department?

- Yes No Undecided

8. Which statement best summarizes your idea of a leader? (Check only one)

- A well developed; all knowing individual.
 An individual who may lack some development, but is a good team builder.

9. What skills and traits do you want in your first line supervisors? (Check all that apply)

- | | | | |
|---|---|---------------------------------------|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Honesty | <input type="checkbox"/> Integrity | <input type="checkbox"/> Decisiveness | <input type="checkbox"/> Good Listener |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Empathetic | <input type="checkbox"/> Commitment | <input type="checkbox"/> Visionary | <input type="checkbox"/> Confident |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Humor | <input type="checkbox"/> Energetic | <input type="checkbox"/> Respectful | <input type="checkbox"/> Popular |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Demanding | <input type="checkbox"/> Responsible | <input type="checkbox"/> Creative | <input type="checkbox"/> Productive |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Motivated | <input type="checkbox"/> Emotional Stable | <input type="checkbox"/> Ethical | <input type="checkbox"/> Flexible |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Risk Taker | <input type="checkbox"/> Courage | <input type="checkbox"/> Enthusiastic | <input type="checkbox"/> Technically Competent |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Other (Please specify) _____ | | | |

10. If you answered no to question #3, why?

- | | | |
|-------------------------------------|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> No Need | <input type="checkbox"/> Budgetary Constraints | <input type="checkbox"/> Staffing Issues |
| <input type="checkbox"/> No Benefit | <input type="checkbox"/> Time Constraints | <input type="checkbox"/> No Curriculum |

11. Would you like a copy of the results of this survey once it has been completed?

- | | |
|------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No |
|------------------------------|-----------------------------|

Name of Department: _____

Contact Name: _____

Thank you for taking the time to complete this questionnaire. Please return the questionnaire by email by July 15, 2006.

LEADERSHIP SKILLS AND TRAITS FEEDBACK FORM

This feedback form is part of an Executive Fire Officer (EFO) research project, through the National Fire Academy (NFA). All participation is voluntary.

1. What is the first level of supervision within your department?

- Sergeant Captain
 Operator/Engineer Other (Specify)
 Lieutenant

2. Does your department have a leadership development course for first line officers?

- Yes No

3. Do you plan to develop and implement a leadership development program?

- Yes No (Go to question #9)

4. Are you using any of the following leadership assessment tools? (Check all that apply)

- Meyers-Briggs Leading, Educating, and Developing
 Covey's 7 Habits Blanchard's Situational Leadership
 Other (Please specify) _____

5. Did you design your own leadership development course?

- Yes No

6. How long is your leadership development course?

- < 1 week 1 week >1 week
 2-4 weeks 4-6 weeks > 6 weeks

7. How long has your department used a leadership development program?

- < 1 year 2-4 years > 5 years

8. Do you feel the program is helping your department?

- Yes No Undecided

9. Which statement best summarizes your idea of a leader? (Check only one)

- A well developed all knowing individual
 An individual who may lack some development, but is a good team builder

10. What skills and traits do you want in your first line officers? (Check all that apply)

- | | | | |
|---|---|---------------------------------------|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Honesty | <input type="checkbox"/> Integrity | <input type="checkbox"/> Decisiveness | <input type="checkbox"/> Good Listener |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Empathetic | <input type="checkbox"/> Commitment | <input type="checkbox"/> Visionary | <input type="checkbox"/> Confident |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Humor | <input type="checkbox"/> Energetic | <input type="checkbox"/> Respectful | <input type="checkbox"/> Popular |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Demanding | <input type="checkbox"/> Responsible | <input type="checkbox"/> Creative | <input type="checkbox"/> Productive |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Motivated | <input type="checkbox"/> Emotional Stable | <input type="checkbox"/> Ethical | <input type="checkbox"/> Flexible |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Risk Taker | <input type="checkbox"/> Courage | <input type="checkbox"/> Enthusiastic | <input type="checkbox"/> Technically Competent |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Other (Please specify) _____ | | | |

11. If you answered no to question #3, why?

- | | | |
|-------------------------------------|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> No Need | <input type="checkbox"/> Budgetary Constraints | <input type="checkbox"/> Staffing Issues |
| <input type="checkbox"/> No Benefit | <input type="checkbox"/> Time Constraints | <input type="checkbox"/> No Curriculum |

12. What is the size of your department?

- | | | |
|----------------------------------|------------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> < 100 | <input type="checkbox"/> 101-299 | <input type="checkbox"/> 300-499 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 500-999 | <input type="checkbox"/> 1000-2999 | <input type="checkbox"/> > 3000 |

13. Which best describes your department?

- | | | |
|-------------------------------------|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> All Career | <input type="checkbox"/> All Volunteer | <input type="checkbox"/> Combination (Career/Volunteer) |
|-------------------------------------|--|---|

14. If requested could a copy of your departments development program be provided?

- | | |
|------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No |
|------------------------------|-----------------------------|

15. Would you like a copy of the results of this survey once it has been completed?

- | | |
|------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No |
|------------------------------|-----------------------------|

Name of Department: _____

Contact Name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip _____

Thank you for taking the time to complete this questionnaire. Please return the questionnaire in the envelope provided by July 15, 2006.