Antigo Fire Department: Our Problems with Employee Retention.

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CERTIFICATION STATEMENT

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Abstract

The research problem is the Antigo Fire Department (AFD) doesn't know why it has experienced a high turnover rate of employees. Over the last 20 years 41 employees has left AFD. The employees had experience up to 13 years at the time of the employees resignation. The constant training and rehiring of new employees has limited AFD from providing the fire and EMS that the citizens of the city of Antigo expect and demand. The purpose is to discover the reasons why AFD has a high turnover. The research will use surveys, questionnaires, and interviews to achieve its purpose.

Using the descriptive method the research paper will try and answer three questions. The first question identifies what programs AFD has to improve employee retention. The second question identifies the reasons our current employees decided to remain with AFD, and the last question will try and identify why our past employees sought equal jobs elsewhere and what programs could be initiated to aid AFD in employee retention.

The results show that the City of Antigo and fire department have no detailed plan on how to improve recruitment and retention. Upon questioning ex-employees it became readily apparent that even though they were generally satisfied with the city of Antigo as a place to live, the need to work where they grew up and the lack of stability at the AFD is a major reason for the ex-employees to have taken a job elsewhere. The current employees chose personal and family reasons for the main reason why they have stayed employed with the city of AFD.

The recommendations include reducing a bullying or harassing culture, provide more career growth potential, rectify the employment instability, and to rehire 1 firefighter paramedic.

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Introduction

The fire service in American has always been a unique organization, one often littered with unique problems that other government departments seldom encounter. For the AFD the problem is: that AFD does not know why it is encountering a high rate of turnover in the fire department. In the last 20 years the AFD has seen 41 resignations, this is out of 18 paid staff positions. Generally the resignations were limited to employees with less than three years of experience, but recently the turnovers have included members of rank and experience up to 13 years as a firefighter.

The high rate of turnover makes the staffing of AFD's ambulances difficult because the new employee, the new employee's field training officer, and a driver must be on every first out ambulance call. Each call removes 60% of the staff from the station. With full staff and completion of the field training process our ambulances only require 2 EMTs to staff instead of three. With the resignation of the two more experienced firefighter\EMTs (FFEMT) and the constant strain of repetitive field training the morale of the AFD has taken a drastic downturn from levels seen a few years ago.

The research problem is the AFD has a high rate of turn-over for full time firefighters. The purpose of this research is to identify why there is a high turn-over rate of full time firefighters for AFD. The hypothesis of the research paper is that most employees choose to leave AFD to return closer to home, or to achieve more employment stability.

To answer the following questions this research paper will utilize the descriptive research method. To help identify why there is a high turnover rate for AFD the research will try and answer three questions:

1. What is the AFD doing to retain full time employees?

2. What reasons do past employees identify why they left the city of AFD.

3. What are the attributes that current employees identify that convinced them to remain

employed with the city of AFD?

Background and Signification

A part of the Executive Development course it was taught that thought research and

change a problem like the recruitment and retention problem that AFD has experienced can be

reduced or eliminated.

The city of Antigo is a rural city located in the Wisconsin River valley in the Northcentral

section of Wisconsin. The city was incorporated in 1885 and AFD was founded as a full-time

paid organization in 1903. The city of Antigo was built upon two basic trades, timber and

farming. Currently the city of Antigo has a population of 8,156 and 3,972 housing units. The

city of Antigo also has 19.1% of its population over the age of 65, compared to the State of

Wisconsin's 13.7%. The city of Antigo per capita income is $19,013 compared to the Wisconsin

state average of $27,192 (Census.gov, 2013, p. 1). In both cases of population, and per capita

income it becomes a challenge for a full time paid fire department to remain economically

feasible.

AFD is a full service fire department that delivers fire protection service to the city of

Antigo, and provides Critical Care Paramedic care and transport to the 432 square mile western

half of Langlade County. AFD also provides interfacility transport from Langlade Hospital and

several local nursing homes. AFD has one station with three shifts with a total of 19 full time

staff and 10 paid on call Emergency Medical Technicians (EMT). Two of the three shifts have 6

personnel consisting of 1 lieutenant and five firefighter\EMT's, the third shift had 5 personnel

consisting of 1 lieutenant and 4 firefighter\EMT's. The normal shift size is six members, but due

to budgetary problems 1 firefighter\EMT position was not filled and left open. The final two

members of AFD are the fire chief and our administrative assistant. The AFD responds annually

to over 2000 fire and EMS calls for service.

Currently, of the 19 full-time members of AFD there are 16 paramedics, 1 intermediate

1999 level, and 2 advanced EMTs. Like most of the full-time departments in the state of

Wisconsin AFD requires basic firefighting classes along with a state of Wisconsin paramedic

license. The required training for an entry-level firefighter is above 1400 hours. The search for

paramedics in the state of Wisconsin is a competitive process and often the supply good quality

firefighter paramedics are less than the demand for paramedic firefighters.

Being a community of lower means we often find ourselves either last or next-to-last in

compensation for the highly sought after firefighter paramedic. AFD's comparable regional fire

departments often are slightly to moderately paid higher, for the equal skill set required by AFD.

The city of Antigo has several different cultural, commercial, and economic difficulties

that make retaining employees more difficult than some other departments located in the state.

These three challenges are a portion of the problem but generally is not something the city of

Antigo or the fire department can address.

Culturally, Antigo does not offer some of the entertainment possibilities the larger

metropolitan areas in the state may offer. Antigo has no regional sports teams, performing arts,

or other entertainment venues coveted by society. The lack of culture for the city of Antigo

makes it difficult for the non-self-reliant person to be satisfied. Generally, employees that have

fared better at AFD are ones that create their own entertainment by using the natural resources

that we have available. Firefighters/paramedics that enjoy hunting, fishing, and winter sports tend to be very satisfied in the area we serve.

The city of Antigo also has very limited commercial areas to help recruit and retain full-time employees. The lack of varied shopping and limited non-fast food restaurants make it difficult for employees to purchase needed goods or services without having to travel 50 miles to the nearest metropolitan area. For example, the three nearest shopping malls are 50, 80, or 90 miles from Antigo.

Economically the city of Antigo has a high rate of fixed income senior citizens. The high rate of fixed income citizens makes it difficult for the fire department to raise the funds necessary to provide the services for the community.

Due to Wisconsin Act 10 the state has imposed a revenue cap to keep property taxes lower. The revenue cap states that governments cannot raise the tax levy above the rate of assessed value for the community without a ballot initiative. With the revenue caps in place the city of Antigo has to look at other methods of paying for the services that the city provides to its citizens. For the fire department and most all other government agencies the choices have come down to: cutting costs, raising user fees, or raising general revenue.

When recruiting and retaining employees, AFD has recognized the importance of employment for the employee's spouse or significant other. Generally, good paying jobs in the city of Antigo are hard to come by. Finding a good job for a spouse or family members are often limited to government work, limited industrial employment, or employment by the local hospital. The lack of decent job opportunities has been cited many times as employees discussed the difficulties of continuing to work for the AFD. The research paper addresses a problem that correlates with the United States Fire Administrations goal to "Improve the fire and emergency services' capability

for response to and recovery from all hazards." (http://www.usfa.fema.gov/about/strategic/, 2013, p. 1).

Literature Review

The purpose of this literature review is to explore and examine the thoughts, ideas and relevant research within the topic of recruitment and retention of employees. During this literature review this paper will be exploring many different topics that try to adequately encompass the problem statement and the purpose of the research. The first question that this literature review will examine is why past employees has either left the city of AFD for other fire departments or have left to seek other gainful employment. The second question that this research will try to examine is the flip side of the first. The second question will try to understand why employees choose to stay with their organization. This question will examine not only employees in the fire service, but in business in general.

Once the literature review has examined what makes people stay and go the next few questions deal with what is being done to prevent the unnecessary loss of personnel. The third section will examine what employers have any control over changing, improving, or eliminating to help not only retaining employees, but recruiting employees that will become long term employees.

The fourth section will deal with the other half of the employment factors. These are factors that employers generally cannot control and will still lead to high turnover rates if the employees are subject to these conditions. This literature review will also connect the importance of proper recruitment and the resulting retention that can follow if there is an employee-employer value match.

The fifth section of this literature review will be looking at what employees look for in a company when they seek long-term employment. In this section the literature review will also discuss what employees see in employers that make them leave prematurely.

The final section of this literature review is dealing strictly with the generation millennia. The generation millennia are the new group of employees that are entering the workforce and causing problems in the way that employers, supervisors, and older coworkers deal with them. In this last section the research will be examining these differences, and how to utilize these differences in a way that maximizes production, happiness, and commitment.

Why Employees Leave

The first section of the literature review is going to examine why at AFD we have seen turnover that far exceeds the normal expected range that AFD has seen over the years. In the general business world there are several things that employees state as the reason they have left their employers. They have stated that poor leadership from middle-management, upper management, and executive level management cause the exodus. Employees have also stated that when job satisfaction wanes that the retention of employees plummets. To a lesser affect employees have left their employers have stated that compensation was a reason for leaving employment. Employees also have recognized the importance of career and job growth within organizations or more importantly the lack thereof. A shortage of promotional ability and career recognition will ensure low employee retention. Employees also suggested that health concerns, job relocation, and various personal reasons have also contributed to a higher rate in turnover in employment status.

      Poor Leadership

This literature research has almost unanimously come to a single conclusion. Poor leadership often has many detrimental effects in not only the overall success of the business, but in this paper it will illustrate the effect of poor leadership on employee recruitment and retention. Often poor leadership is the hardest to repair because it takes self analyzation of the people that can make the difference to change them. It is too often that turnover and recruitment problems are placed squarely on the lack of commitment by the employee. According to Dawson and Abbott said employees are just looking for a healthy work environment that includes a work environment that fosters system wide trust and the ability to communicate openly and honestly up and down the employment ladder of the company (Dawson & Abbott, 2011, p. 292). The need for trust in a work department is often unspoken until the employee has left the organization. In her book Leigh Branham talks about the four fundamental needs that employees cite for the reasons they have left employment in the past. One of these four fundamental needs is the need for trust. Leigh Branham explains that employees expect their companies to deliver on the promises that they made before and during employment. It continues to explain the importance of honesty and openness and she communications the importance of the employer investing in the employee's success and for every employee to be treated fairly. (Branham, 2005, p. 19) It is too often that employers see the employee employer relationship as a one way street. What can the employee deliver to the workplace and how can the employee improve production and the methods of the organization. It is important to note how critical the employers investment in the employee growth makes in the decision whether to remain an employee with their current organization or to move on to another organization. The one way employee employer relationship has to end if employers want to retain the employees of tomorrow.

When it comes to senior leadership is apparent to Branham that there are three questions that employees need to have answered if the employers want to see an improvement on employee recruitment and retention. The first question is: will the leaders steer the ship to success? The second question is relatively simple. Can I trust the organization to do as they say they will? Third question is, does the employer have trust and confidence in me? (Branham, 2005, p. 183)

As the literature research looks at leadership and the impact it has on retention the first question that has to be answered by employees is whether their employers have the right vision, have the right strategy, has hired the right people complete the work, and if the employer and senior management has the personal character and competence to complete the work (Branham, 2005, p. 184). It is important that the employees know that their futures are in the hands of competent leaders and those leaders has the skills and morals to treat employees with respect and create a work environment that has a solid vision towards the future.

There are a lot of organizations that fail to answer the next question in a manner that is satisfactory to the employee. Can the upper management be trusted to do as they say? Can the management uphold and deliver the promises and commitments they have made to the employee? In the fire service an employee coming in expects many things to occur. A couple of these include a safe working environment that provides the correct tools and safety measures, leaders that will make decisions in nonemergency and emergency situations that protect their safety, and leaders who help propel the fire apartment to the unified goal of that particular department. A violation of this trust can have a long-term detrimental effect on not only retention but also recruitment. Departmental reputations are often widespread and known by prospective applicants. If the senior leadership cannot deliver on their promises and commitments employers

will find that employees that are not committed and dedicated to their employers will seek

employment elsewhere.

The third question that is important to employees is a level of trust that employers have

with the employee (Branham, 2001, p. 184). It is clear that it is as important for the employee to

have trust in the employer as well as it is for the employer have that trust, or to attempt to build

that trust with the employee. All employees want to feel that they are trustworthy and in

important part of the organization. It does not matter where this bridge of trust begins but it does

matter that this building of trust does start whether it is started by the employer or the employee.

Often this building trust is seen as the employee's responsibility but in many cases the employers

has not only a better capability but also the resources to build that bridge of trust quicker and

more successful than if the employer left up to the employee to initiate the process. An

organization that cannot recruit trustworthy employees will suffer from a degraded culture and a

continuance of low retention and high turnover rates.

Job Satisfaction

After poor leadership, job satisfaction comes as another major determining factor whether

the employee in question decides to make their choice of employer a permanent one or a

transient while looking for the next better opportunity. Even though wages are often tied to job

satisfaction Abbott's research has explained that generally when there is a work for wages

motivation it is generally a poor method of employee retention (Abbott, 2006, p. 189). Wages

can help maintain retention, but in the end if that is the only job satisfaction criteria that are

being met it will be difficult to maintain that employee. Job satisfaction has to deliver in many

other different ways for it to be effective. According to Branham one of the more important job

satisfaction characteristics is that the employee feels that they are competent in their job

(Branham, 2005, p. 21). Often feeling competent says a lot about the employee and the employer having shared values and trying to achieve the same goals. Even though it's called self-competence in its feelings are buried well within the trust and the shared values of the employee-employer relationship.

Compensation

Even though wages was specified it is a small percentage of the overall reasons that were given for people to leave employment. Wages is still a factor that we need to consider important enough to deal with. Often low-pay and high stress will force an employee to look for employment opportunities that offer better wages and eliminate or reduce the amount of work stress. One of the concerns that have been brought up by exiting employees is the gap between line personnel compensation and senior leadership compensation. It has been found that when the gap is exceedingly large between what the employee makes and the senior-level management makes there seems to be contentment disconnect that causes employees to question their work and their organization (Gerhart et al., 1995, p. 6). In the overall picture even though some employees try and make the case that low wages is a major motivating factor in the high turnover and low retention rates it is in fact a small reason why employees give for leaving. According to Branham 12% of the employees that left employment cited low wages as the main reason for leaving their current position (Branham, 2005, p. 24). The stat of 12% would lead some to believe that a bears very little on the reason that employees leave employment, but Branham also states that 75% of employees that leave, depart for a job that pays more than their current position(Branham, 2005, p. 121).

Personal Growth

Another major contributor to low retention and high turnover is an employee's having no room for personal and professional growth. An organization that has no way to reward their employees without pay and benefits will have a tendency to lose employees as they search for organizations that allow for growth. Maslow in his journal Theory of Motivation he puts a priority on the connection between growth in the workplace and a concept he calls "esteem with promotion" (Maslow, 1943, p. 10). Maslow states that as a basic need people need to feel esteem in their life and one of the ways that a person can feel this esteem is from the workplace by receiving praise, increase benefits, promotions, and professional growth (Maslow, 1943, p. 10). There has been a trend in the fire service to reduce the number of middle management positions. Often this reduction in promotable positions is a way to reduce the cost to provide fire and EMS protection. The lack of promotable positions has created an unforeseen problems for some departments. An employee could be stagnated in his or her position for the duration of their career if they're hired at a time where the promotable positions are held by people with little years of experience. In AFD all three lieutenants were promoted at the age of 33 years old. In the background and significance it explained that there are only 4 promotable positions in AFD all of which are being held by employees that has up to 12 years of career left before those employees are qualified for retirement. The employees that were hired near and slightly after them will have to assume that unless something out of the ordinary occurs that they will never be promoted whether they perform superbly or if they perform poorly. Knowing that, no matter how well your job performance is, that those positions are going to be stagnated for 20 years is a poor motivator and as Maslow has said the esteem comes with promotion and esteem is still one of the basic needs of Maslow's hierarchy of needs (Maslow, 1943, p. 20)

Building upon that we look back at Branham four fundamental human needs. The literature review has already talked about the need for trust. Next we move into the second fundamental human need, the need to have hope. Each employee according to Branham needs to believe that they have ability to grow. Grow as a professional, grow as a person, and be part of growth of an organization. The employees must feel that they have an opportunity to advance or make their careers progress, leading to higher and higher earnings and more respect (Branham, 2005, p. 19). Organizations that has ignored this human need has seen their retention lower and their turnover rate increase as employees seek job opportunities where they feel their performance and contributions will be rewarded with career growth, promotions, and higher pay.

Organizational failures that contributed to low retention and high turnover rates are also cited by Branham. They include unfair or inefficient internal selection processes, not hiring from within, favoritism and promotion decisions, and insufficient training (Branham, 2005, p. 97).

Uncontrollable Circumstances

Even if it was believed that an organizations met every need of the employee there would still be turnover and there would still be retention problems. There are just circumstances that an employer cannot affect. These are items that are built into the environment, built into the community, and other personal reasons that as an organization they have no power to correct or mitigate. Some of these problems that an employer has very little power to correct or help with are health issues of the employee, the employee's family, the employee's extended family, or friends. Often when employees encounter a situation where due to a family illness, it is more beneficial to relocate you will find people leaving. There is little an employer can do to prevent that situation. Another item that the employer has very little control over is unwanted career relocation. In the fire service, an organization that is based in a community that serves, it is very

unlikely that somebody would be forced to relocate to another area. The last major cited reason

for people to resign from employment is personal reasons. These can range from anywhere from

financial problems, to health issues, climate problems to almost anything that affects the

employees basic needs.

The key is to realize the connection between low retention and in high turnover and the

reasons why employees leave organizations. Once we find out why employees tend to leave

organizations is then up to the organization to decide as employers what we can control and

change and things that we cannot control or change. Improving the things we can control and

change will increase our ability to retain employees, it will increase the ability to recruit

employees that will make a career out of their choice, and it will help reverse the high turnover

that the fire service in this area has seen over the last few years.

Unmet Expectations

In the book The *Seven Hidden Reasons Employees Leave* the author makes her most

salient point. Most of the recruitment and retention problems that occur in the workforce are due

to unmet expectations between the employee and the employer (Branham, 2005, p. 33) The

importance of open and honest communication between the employee and the employer cannot

be understated. If either side is left to guess what the other side expects and is required to

succeed, the relationship will often lead to failure. It is critical for any organization to speak

openly and honestly to their employees to make sure the employee understands what the

employer expects and what the employee shall receive in return. Conversely, it is as important

for the employee to speak openly and honestly to explain to the employer what they expect to get

out of their career and what they are going to bring to the table. With open and honest

communication the odds are that the unmet expectations will be minimized and therefore

discontent and unhappiness may be reduced and therefore reduce the amount of turnover and increase employee retention.

Why Do Employees Stay?

In direct contrast to why people believe it is equally as important to determine why people stay. Almost every point that was made in why people leave has a counterpoint in why people say. Poor leadership, job satisfaction, compensation, room for growth, and other intangibles make for an environment that employees want to stay part of and want to become involved in. Also, it is clear that there are some reasons people stay that are not tied to the employer. These are the community reasons that people tend to stay with employers. Whether the employees involvement with church or civic organizations, the attractiveness of the school system, the availability of natural resources, or personal and family safety can make an impact on whether the employee chooses to stay with their employer. Realistically, we also have to identify the fact that some employees choose not to leave because it is easier to stay. It may end up that the employee spouse or children cause enough life stress in response to a threat of a job relocation that the relocation may not be worth the accompanying stress that it may bring. There are times also that an employee wishes to leave but can't find a job elsewhere.

One of the things that an employer can do to make employees want to stay is to make sure that career development is a high priority within the organization. In The 2020 Workplace the authors conducted a survey to find what the different workplace generations expect from the workplace of the future. Both the generation X. generation and the millennial generation indicates that available advancement in their career is the number one priority in choosing an employer. (Meister & Willeyard, 2010, p. 191) In second place in the survey was straight and honest feedback. (Meister & Willeyard, 2010, p. 192) The authors have made the connection that

the newer generations not only want quicker feedback, but they also want honest

communication. Giving honest communication to an employee creates buy-in and makes the

employee feel like the organization feels that the employee is important enough to now for them

to get deal with honestly. Howe and Strauss indicate that the new generation will be more like

the post war generation and less like the Generation X. (Howe & Strauss, 2009, p. 25)

What Can We Control?

A life as in the job market is as important to understand what can be changed as we

cannot change. Often the problem within the problem is things that we cannot control. It doesn't

mean that we can't try to minimize the effect on the employee, but employers need to realize

when effort and resources are being placed in the wrong area. If we take an example of a

hurricane there is little we can do to prevent hurricanes from occurring, but there are multitudes

of things we can prevent the damage from those hurricanes from occurring. This is not unlike the

job market. Like higher floodgates, larger capacity tops, and better evacuation plans there are

things that employers can do to minimize employees leaving for other jobs. Employers can look

at improving poor leadership, improving job satisfaction, improving compensation, and

improving advancement and growth capabilities.

Poor Leadership

Poor leadership is like a disfiguring scar on an otherwise perfect face, without a mirror is

very difficult for the person to see it, but it is obvious to everyone else that scar is present. In

reference after reference authors and studies alike both indicate poor leadership as one of the

major factors in whether an employee stays or leaves. Like the scar on the perfect face new

employees can spot poor leadership within the first couple weeks of employment. Branham

stresses in her book that abusive managers or toxic environments will not be stood for by the

employees (Branham, 2005, p. 13). The employees are looking for an employer that walks the

walk and talks the talk. In these cases leadership from middle management to all the way to the

CEO are expected to be honest and have integrity of their decisions and their actions. It is very

important that employees feel that employers have not only the best interest of the company, the

best interest in the employee in mind, and the best interest in the community in mind.

In the McGrath's consulting paper they state that an unaware leader can really make

employee's lives miserable. The authors continue on to say that when supervisors does not

communicate with employees the managers create a work environment that breeds discontent

and drives low retention rates (McGrath & McGrath, 2013, p. 30). Even though the face of the

organization is often seen publicly by the color of the font of their letterhead and the billboards

advertising the company it is the middle manager that provides the face of company to the

employee. When the middle managers create a hostile, abusive, or incompetent work

environment employees will tend to disengage and feel less connected emotionally to the success

or failure of their employer. Once employees lose the connection between themselves, and the

employer, the worker quality will tend to suffer and the employees drive to remain at the current

employer will slowly wane.

In Maslow's hierarchy of needs he stresses the importance of the known versus the

unknown (Maslow, 1943, p. 8). Poor leadership has a tendency of leaning towards the unknown.

Employees tend to have a common preference to be with people that are known to them. We can

extrapolate that to how employees see their employers. Employers that have transparency that

have well laid out goals and employers that communicate honestly with the employees who build

on his own feature and have a tendency to retain employees. This known versus unknown

argument sets directly at one of Maslow's lowest needs, that of safety (Maslow, 1943, p. 8). An

employer that provides a preponderance of unknown will not allow the employee to leave the

safety level and will prevent that employee from growing and reaching their full potential. Along

with the inability to reach their full potential employees never form the bond necessary to

become part of the employer's vision and therefore be more likely to seek employment elsewhere

(Branham, 2005, p. 97).

One of the easiest ways employers can solve this poor leadership gap is with honest and

consistent communications. The newer generations of today place a high value on integrity and

quick and honest feedback. In *Keeping the People who Keep You in Business* the author

reiterates that getting good feedback and coaching is more than just having meetings. It gives a

chance for the employer and the employee to forge a relationship that will help bridge that poor

leadership gap and help foster trust (Branham, 2005, p. 76).

Job Satisfaction

Job satisfaction comes in many different varieties. It could be satisfaction in pay, it could

be satisfaction in work completed, or it could be satisfaction in the prestige of working for

particular employer. In the Eisenberger Journal the authors state that employees that see the

employee in a good light often see themselves in a good light (Eisenberger, Stinglhammer,

Vandenberghe, Sucharski, & Rhoades, 2002, p. 565). Job satisfaction rarely is wholly dependent

on the paycheck that is taken at the end of the week. As Eisenberger's group states in their

journal for an employee to feel job satisfaction it is important for the employee to feel that the

employer is a good company to work for (Eisenberger et al., 2002, p. 565). Job satisfaction also

does not stop at the doorstep of the business. Life stress can greatly impact the way an employee

feels about an employer, especially if the employer is a governmental organization that is bound

to the community. Branham states in her book that when there is a work stress imbalance,

especially when employees are made to do more with less job satisfaction will suffer and so will

the recruitment and retention of our most viable resource, the employee (Branham, 2005, p. 148).

Going back to McGrath consulting group paper they state that the prevention of feelings of

accomplishment or appreciation is a sure way to reduce job satisfaction (McGrath & McGrath,

2013, p. 30).

As employers, if we expect to retain the employees that make our jobs successful we

need to understand the balance between production and leadership. Poor leadership if not

corrected will cause employees to leave and make it difficult to recruit new employees to fulfill

their spots.

Compensation

It has been said earlier in a literature review that compensation has little to do with

employees access to other employers, but it also stated that 75% of all employers to leave a

company end up in a job that pays more than their last one. It would be shortsighted for

employers to think that the only compensation that makes a difference is monetary. In the high-

tech industries we find companies catering to the employees and providing them compensation

in ways never thought of in past by employers such as GM, General Electric, or IBM. Today

Google provides their employees with free gourmet lunches, free available childcare, free

employee health programs, and job flexibility. These items are all things that an employer can do

in lieu of wages and salaries. In Lancaster's and Stillman's Journal they speak about the

emergence of paid time off (PTO) time instead of vacation and sick leave. Employers have to

invent different ways of compensating their employees. In this journal the newer generations are

looking at PTO time as a way to be able to have more time off without reporting to the employer

(Lancaster & Stillman, 2003, p. 70). The traditional vacation and sick leave model that the baby

boomer and other generations have become used to is becoming antiquated and is being replaced

more and more with the PTO model.

Job growth

There are not always positions available for employees to be promoted to. The idea of job

growth for most people is rooted in promotion and job title. In difficult economic times this is

not always possible. For employers to help retain and recruit employees the employers need to

find different ways of pseudo-promotions to remind employees of their importance to the

organization. Job growth could be as simple as putting a person in charge of a project as a project

manager as a temporary means of showing confidence in that employee. Even though project

manager status may be a temporary promotion to employee with or without any salary

compensation the employees of today can utilize such pseudo-promotions in a way to bolster

their resume and help them grow within the employer or seek a better job elsewhere. Branham

states in her book that employers need to give the employees the tools for taking charge of their

careers (Branham, 2005, p. 219). This practice can even work with newer employees. Putting

them in charge of small projects can compensate them in ways that a paycheck could not.

Uncontrollables

As with most problems it is critically important for us to realize what we can and cannot

change. In the above section we chronicled some of the things that employers can change to help

retain the employees that they have and also aid in the recruitment of quality employees. As

important as what we can change we have to understand the things that we cannot change. Some

employees or their families may come down with health issues that force either a job relocation

or resignation. Without having fully encompassing health care employers do not have the

resources or the ability to prevent employees from leaving under that circumstance. Also outside

of employers control is relocation of a family member. In the fire service, especially here in

Antigo one of the biggest retention problems that we run into is the employee returning from

where they grew up. As this paper stated earlier we may not be able to control employees picking

their hometown over AFD, but there are things that as a fire department we can do to help

eliminate the exodus. Through content programs, scholarship programs, or summer internship

programs the fire department could build a base of employees that would prefer to stay in their

city of birth and with our fire department

Employee's wants

It wasn't too far ago in the past that the needs and wants of the employee was a laughable

concept. In the end the only motivation or employers responsibility was the paycheck at the end

of the week. As our generations change so does the way that our employees expect to be

handled. Often this generational change creates conflicts that are often difficult to manage or

mitigate. Some of these wants of the employees include security in the workplace, insurance

coverage, flexibility in scheduling, the offering of challenging work, and the ability to work from

home.

Job security

In *The 2020 Workplace* the authors compare and contrast the different attitudes of past

generations; where the traditionalists picked a job that would suit them for their career the

generation X. and the Millennials picked jobs that they can spend a few years and then would

move on. In the millennial generation there is very little career loyalty (Meister & Willeyard,

2010, p. 18). In Maslow's hierarchy of needs, Maslow speaks upon the importance of the theory

of an orderly predictable world (Maslow, 1943, p. 7). A job that doesn't provide that orderly

predictable workplace will erode the employee's vision of their long-term job security with the

employer. Once the employee feels that job security is not present, the view of security will erode. In Maslow's study that just like infants that encounter a non-predictable disordered world become anxious and develop feelings of being unsafe, the employees of the company that is unpredictable and disordered will also have those same feelings and rule tend not to see their employer in a good light. Those feelings in combination produced a recipe where the retention and recruitment of employees become an uphill task.

Insurance

At AFD we have lost a few employees due to lack of insurance. A couple of firefighters cited was the lack of immediate health-care coverage, the lack of dental coverage, and a lack of a vision program. Insurance is another aspect of security, but often is an aspect of security at the home, and security with the family. An employer who offers health coverage will help eliminate the safety needs that will prevent people from moving on to self-actualization and becoming a top-tier employee that not only sees their employer in a good light sees themselves in a good light (Maslow, 1943, p. 10).

Flexibility

The job market since 2001 has taken a turn to the worse and has affected many people's lives. Even though it has become harder and harder to find employment, employees are still seeking employers that offer flexibility in the way work is completed and the hours in which work can be done. In a connected world is not uncommon for the employees of today to work in many different environments. This includes spending some time at the physical location of the employer, spending time working from home, or spending time working abroad. This flexibility has become an important recruitment tool due to the fact that because of a poor economy many more two person households are now seeking full-time jobs or even multiple jobs to make ends

meet. The flexibility offered by some employers can aid in reducing the job stress caused by two person employed family.

Making a difference

Employees today find it is very important for them to feel connected and needed by their employer. May it be through constant performance reviews, open and honest communications, or through the connection of a group the employees they are seeking employers that bring more to the table then the work for pay model that has been pervasive throughout the years.

McClelland stated in his journal that is very important for an employee to feel a feeling of affiliation to be part of a group and to feel like they are and needed an internal part of the organization (McClelland, 1961, p. 1). By getting the employees to feel affiliation we create a bought-in employee that feels part of the end product and feeling like the tread that the car contacts the pavement with. To create this feeling of affiliation and employer can do a lot of non-monetary things to aid in the acquisition of affiliation. Giving even new employees leadership responsibilities, or project management responsibilities can help this affiliation by making the employees feel like they are a needed and important part of the organization. Also to increase the feelings of affiliation and employer can maintain or implement lines of open and honest communication.

In the same concept of affiliation another thing an employer can do to help the employee feel like an important member of the organization is to trust that employee with work that challenges the employee to do better. The millennial generation of today will take offense to the repeated and menial work given to the employee if it does not challenge them as employees. A challenging work environment makes the employee feel that the employer has trust in their

abilities and gives the employees the ability to show the employer or their true merit (Ramlall, 2004, p. 57).

Generations at Work

This paper indicates what the employee wants and what the employer is delivering. A mismatch in either one of those two can create an unhappy employee. It needs to be understood that there is more to a happy employee then the quid pro quo that we are used to giving employees. Each generation that has entered, worked, and retired from the fire service has had its own unique impact upon the fire service. It is critical for retention and recruitment that we not only understand the new generation that is applying for our jobs, but also understand the impacts on the generations that are working currently.

Generation Y. has a large technological drive and are fluid with many forms of a products, social media, and the software that drives our business on the front end. Generation Y. employees also are requiring us to do constant and pertinent employee reviews. The days of the six month or one year review will not satisfy the generation Y. employee. Leigh Branham states in her book that the performance review when given over short intervals helps the generation Y. employee developed a sense of worth and therefore a sense of connection and buy in (Branham, 2005, p. 20). Generation Y. employee also covets flexibility in the workplace.

Understanding that we have at influx of generation Y. employees, the fire service needs to know how to engage them. The key is to engage them to make sure that we are getting the most out of them and that they are finding their employment fulfilling. The generation Y. employee sees themselves at work connected and that they are part of the organization, and not just a cog in the wheel. It is interesting that the outside view of the generation Y. employee is that they are hard and callous to the outside world growing up in a world that is much different

than other generations had to experience. In reality Wilson and Gerber state that they are not the most hardened, but they are the most sheltered generation that we have seen so far (Wilson & Gerber, 2008, p. 31).

  To engage the generation Y. employee the workplace has to be able to give the employee and ability to help solve their problems with their colleagues. Generation Y. employees are reluctant to be just a worker; instead they want to be an active part of the solution. The generation Y. employee will tend to connect their individual contributions with their own company's goals. Again Wilson and Gerber state that the generation Y. employee will equate good news for them with good news for the company (Wilson & Gerber, 2008, p. 31). As they are made to feel good about their contributions and that they feel valued and respected the generation Y. employee will more likely continue working with their employer. Understanding the generation Y. employee is only the first part of the job. The meat of the situation actually occurs when we have the two generations collide. In the fire service currently the baby boomers are slowly leaving the organization while the generation X. employees are becoming a majority of the fire service. It is how the generation X. employee, the baby boomers, and the generation Y. employee coexist that makes the biggest difference on how we retain and recruit our employees. According to Branham the generations X and Y employee may expect plenty of vacation time, promotions based purely on merit, hands-off supervision, and frequent constructive feedback. Conversely, the baby boomers, which are making up the majority of the upper echelons in fire departments currently expect and demand different things. The baby boomer leadership expects you to wait to receive vacation. They expect promotions based on experience**,** they expect to give and receive close supervision, and only to give and receive feedback when it's negative (Branham, 2001, p. 35).

As the generation Y. employee starts to populate the fire service, like all generations before them they will also experience a new generation of employees that both feel and expect different things than the current generation Y. employee. The 2020 generation is going to be more highly connected and expect more coddling than the current generation Y. employee does. In Meister's and Willeyard's book they explore the new 2020 generation and how they're going to be impacting the way we deal and involve their generation. In fact, even today we can see the impact of the 2020 generation on how we recruit. When the baby boomers and the generation X. employee looks for employment they did so in the print media and by job postings. The 2020 generation will is so technological driven that they're expecting to be notified by e-mail, text message, or even social media such as Facebook, twitter, or MySpace (Meister & Willeyard, 2010, p. 217)

Employers Cost

It is imperative as a fire service that we understand the impact and cost of not being able to recruit and retain our employees. For every employee that we lose and have to retrain a new employee it costs the employer's money that is in high demand. Even though the influx of new employees bring new ideas, new concepts, and a retraining of all line personnel these are benefits of the new employee that can be done without having to add the new employee. In the Ramlall paper he states that the cost of every new employee that leaves and has to be replaced is roughly one year's salary to the employer (Ramlall, 2004, p. 52). Often the monetary loss is the easiest to replace. When an employee leaves they take with them the knowledge and experience that they've gained through the years of service with the company. Each time that we lose knowledge and experience without compensation he employer suffers. (Ramlall, 2004, p. 35)

One of the concepts that Wilson and Gerber set forth is that generations repeat in cycles. In Wilson and Gerber's book they explain that the 2020 generation, or the millennial like they are coined are powerfully shaped by parental reaction to the perceived laxness of the 60s and 70s (Wilson & Gerber, 2008, p. 30). Therefore Wilson and Gerber continue on to explain that we can expect the 2020 generation to be more like the World War II generation that came before the baby boomers.

In summation the literature review adjusted the view of the researcher to include the things that an employer can control and the circumstances the employer can control. The impact of pay and benefits also was less in the literature review than the researcher expect.

Procedures

The main subject of this research paper was to identify the reasons that AFD has difficulty recruiting and retaining firefighters. To identify the reasons why firefighters choose to stay or leave three questions were developed and three different methods of retrieval were implemented. The hypothesis of the research paper is that most employees choose to leave AFD to return closer to home, or to achieve more employment stability.

The first question asked what is the AFD doing to help retain full-time employees. The procedure was to develop a questionnaire for the city administrator, the fire chief, and the director of public safety. After the questionnaires were formatted each person was interviewed individually and their answers recorded. These three positions were selected due to their overall control over their segment in the city. The city administrator is the overall city manager overseeing all operations and all city department heads. The city administrator would have the overall say to create policies and procedures, and pay and benefits for all employees. The fire

chief and the director of public safety were selected due to their narrow scope of overview of the fire department.

The interview with both the director of public safety and the fire chief encompasses the programs and procedures used by the fire department to encourage retention of employees and programs and procedures used to recruit highly qualified individuals. The question specifically targeted policies that are in place currently that aid in retention recruitment. The interview also questions the fire departments opinion on the benefits and pay package, the methods used to improve safety of the employee and among other questions what the city of Antigo does to ensure available career growth.

The interview with the city administrator asked basically the same questions that were posed to the fire chief and the director of public safety narrowly looking at the fire department while the questions developed for the city administrator looked at the city as a whole. It was expected that the answers given by the city administrator and the Fire chief would have some divergence. After compiling the answers on the interview it was shown to have similar answers with some strengths and weaknesses coming from the fire department level and some strengths and weaknesses coming from the city as a whole.

A copy of the director of public safety and the fire chiefs questionnaire is included in appendix A and appendix B respectively. A copy of the interview sheet used for the city administrator is found in appendix C. The limitations of the interview is the scope of the city and the limited view of all interviewees.

The second question tries to identify the reasons that firefighters over the past 20 years have decided to leave the city of AFD and take a job either in the fire service, the EMS service, or another job in the private sector. After consulting human resources and compiling a list of all

the members that have left the city of Antigo it was decided filter some of the respondent pool by eliminating people who fit the following profiles:

1. Firefighters who were terminated from service.

2. Firefighters who retired.

3. Firefighters who retired due to disability.

After the list was pared down to the firefighters that have left a questionnaire was created and distributed each individual confidentially to fill out and return if they chose. Out of the 35 firefighters that were sent the survey 17 returned the survey. The survey was created by researching survey methods and developing questions that were identified in the literature review as major components of an employee's choice whether to leave or stay with a specific employer.

The limitations of the questionnaire were the critical importance of the need of the past employee to remain anonymous. At first an interview process was initiated, but many ex-employees refused to participate.

The third and final question dealt with the employees that have decided to remain employed with the AFD and why exactly did they decided not to leave for another department. It was decided that the sample size would be one third of the fire department. One of the more important steps in this process was to guarantee anonymity to make sure that the persons responding to the interview would have assurances that their answers would not be tied back to them. It was felt that without anonymity the answers may have been skewed to a point where they may become ineffective and worthless.

After compiling the list of firefighters that have remained with the fire department their names were placed into an Excel spreadsheet and then using the random feature the top six names were selected to take part in the survey process.

Using the basic template from the past employee questionnaire and interview document was created. This document was then sent to each employee for them to answer in selection and essay form. Of the six employees that were chosen for this written interview process five chose to turn in their interview sheet.

The limitations of the survey were the critical importance of the need of the employee to remain anonymous. At first an interview process was initiated, but many employees refused to participate.

<div align="center">**Results**</div>

Fire chief and Director of Public Service Interview

Comparing the answers given by the interviews with the Fire chief and the director of public safety the answers in regard to the fire department as a whole were relatively the same with little divergence. When they were asked what has AFD done to help retain employees their answers included providing comparable wages and benefits to their employees, comparing to not only the internal comparables of city employees, but also a comparing wages to private sector jobs located inside the city of Antigo. They also recognize that the addition of a newer fire station, equipment, and technology allows the employee to do their job in relative comfort and ease aids in their retention and recruitment of employees. One of the points that was stressed was the safe environment that is provided for employees to work with.

The next question dealt with what specific programs does AFD have initiated or is providing aid in the retention and recruitment of firefighters. The fire chief was quick to point out that the field training officer program allows the new employee to understand what is expected of them and to provide them with both positive and constructive feedback during their first year. This communication with the new employee is believed to provide a conduit from the

employee to management and therefore aids in the communication and helps retain the new employee.

The next question dealt with any specific guidelines in place to aid in recruitment and retention. The Fire chief identified our standard operating guidelines of the whole and did not specify any one standard operating guidelines that specifically addressed recruitment and retention. When asked about the compensation package at city of AFD offers its employees both the Fire chief and the director of public safety both gave their opinion that the AFD has a good compensation package compared to other fire departments in the area which they believe helps keep new employees here.

When dealing with employee resignations a look at management and managerial experience has to be made. The next question on the questionnaire asks the questions what the fire department is doing to make sure that their supervisors are as high quality. The responses varied from allowing our senior leadership to keep up with the current level of EMS services, allowing managers to pursue and obtain their educations, allowing access to the National Fire Academy, and working with our insurance partner CVMIC who provides both fire officer training and personnel training to all management personnel.

The next question posed to both the fire chief and the director of public safety surrounds the safety in the workplace and what is being done by the city of AFD to ensure that the safety of the individual employee is being looked after. The Fire chief interview stated that as a department we try to follow NFPA guidelines whenever the AFD can. The fire chief also indicated that the AFD follows our state regulatory agency with their safety recommendations, MSDS sheets up to date and in handy locations, our city is a mandatory no smoking employer, and requires employees to wear seatbelts when operating city vehicles. When asked what

programs AFD has in place to ensure fewer growth near the fire chief or the director of public safety couldn't identify any specific program that specifically deals with ensuring career growth for the employee.

City Administrator Interview

The interview questions for the city administrator was not much different from the interview questions provided to the fire chief and the director of public safety. As stated earlier the main difference between the interviews given to the fire chief and the director of public safety and the city administrator was the focus on the city as an entire employer instead of the fire department as an individual department. The city administrator is a relatively new employee with about 18 month's experience.

The first question posed to the city administrator is what the city of Antigo has done to help retain employees. On this question the city administrator decided to elaborate on many different things that the city of Antigo has done to help retain employees. Some of the main features that the city administrator believes that help retain employees is the city's strong commitment to training, communications, and their valuing of employees. The city administrator then continued on to expand on the difference between quality of life and quality of perception. He indicated that quality of life is felt more by the citizens that live inside the city then employees or workers that are coming to look at the city as a place of residence. He also indicated that quality of perception is the attractiveness shown by the city to employees or citizens looking to relocate to the city of Antigo. The city administrator feels that Antigo has a good quality of life but could do more to improve the quality of perception. Continuing on the city administrator identifies the new employee handbook as a positive impact. The handbook

implemented due to the passing of Act 10 is an indication to the employee that they are a valued part of the organization.

The next question posed to the city administrator was to identify the specific programs that the city of Antigo may have in place to help retain and recruit employees. In conjunction with Langlade Hospital, the city of Antigo's health insurance provider, and the city of Antigo they have developed a well fit program. Well-Fit is a program that is a monitored fitness program proctored through the hospital using trained physical therapists and month-to-month exams to improve employee health.

The city administrator also identified employee appreciation features that help identify employees for their good deeds or their length of service. When asked about the guidelines and procedures that the city of Antigo has in place to help retain employees several examples were given. The city administrator identified the cities safety policies, the employee handbook, sexual harassment policies, and the city's drug and free policy. The city administrator believes that these policies help retain and recruit new employees. Like the fire chief and director of public safety the city administrator also believes that the wages are comparable both internally and externally.

When asked about what the city is doing to improve the effectiveness of management the city administrator stated that this is one point that the city could do a better job in. The city administrator believes offering more strenuous training for managers and offering more training to both middle managers and line employees can improve the quality of manager. Also identifying MSDS sheet locations, safety committee, working together with CVMIC the city administrator identified many things that the city of Antigo does to improve the safety of the employee. One of the stronger points that the city administrator made was to identify policies and procedures that can enhance the safety of the employee was not actually a policy but the

ability for the city to become more proactive the problems and less reactive to problems. The city administrator stated that with the economic downturn some of the proactive safety measures that have been being done at the city level may need to be reinstituted or at least revamped.

When questioned about the availability for career growth and advancement opportunities the city administrator stated that depending on the department the availability of career growth and advancement are extremely limited. The city administrator did state that both the police department and the fire department has adequate career growth potential. To aid in career growth the city administrator discussed the city's position on the employee handbook the availability of lateral transfers, flex scheduling for some employees, and financial aid for continuing with the employees education. Lastly, the question was posed to the city administrator on some of the programs or policies that help recognize employees. The city administrator gave many examples of individual items that help recognize employees, but admitted that the city does not have systemic way of recognizing employees deeds, actions, or accomplishments.

Ex-Employee Questionnaire:

The first question posed in the ex-employee questionnaire was basically the reasons why that specific employee had decided to leave the city of AFD. As part of the question each employee was given a yes or no opportunity to identify the reasons why the left. Over half of the respondents identified higher pay, better career opportunities, and being closer to home. The ex-employees also stated that family and other personal reasons, instability at the fire department, and better benefits were also important considerations when making decisions whether to stay with the AFD or to leave the AFD. Roughly 1/3 of the respondents identified leadership problems and the ability to move to a busier department at significant reasons why they left. On

the bottom of the scale with about 5 to 20% ex-employees responding includes a career change, conflicts with other employees, conflict with managers, and improved work life balance.

The next question focused on the job itself. When asked if the job is challenging enough 16 of the 17 respondents agreed that the job is challenging. On the other hand 13 out of 17 rated the availability for advancement as not available or limited. All 17 respondents stated that the workload present at the fire department was at a manageable level.

The next question dealt with the availability of sufficient resources and sufficient staff to deal with current emergencies. 12 out of 17 respondents felt that there was not enough resources or staff available to manage the emergency response. 14 out of 17 said that their colleagues listened and appreciated their suggestions. The majority of ex-employees also felt that their skills were effectively used. Finally a little more than half believe that they had access to adequate training and development programs.

The third section asked the ex-employees about the salary and benefits available to them at AFD and whether it had any major stake in the decision to terminate their employment with the city of AFD. 10 out of 17 respondents stated that salary was adequate for the job and the city. 100% of the respondents felt that wages and salaries paid on time and in a seamless manner. 14 of 17 responded that generally other benefits were also comparable and acceptable. When it came to work life balance being promoted in practice little more than half agreed with that statement. 15 out of 17 respondents believe that the fire departments health insurance was adequate.

The next question dealt with the ex-employees opinion on how the city of Antigo dealt with their employees individually. 11 out of 17 respondents felt that initial 40 hour week of days training that the city of AFD provides all new employees health in their progress as a firefighter.

13 out of 17 respondents felt that video of AFD was a positive and good environment to work in. 14 out of 17 respondents all felt that the AFD provided adequate equipment to allow the employees to complete their work assignments. 16 out of 17 ex-employees questioned also felt that they got along with their fellow employees. 13 out of 17 ex-employees felt that the city of AFD was efficient in its dealings. 12 out of 17 respondents felt that the internal communication at the AFD was at a sufficient for excellent level. 2 responding members indicated that there was bullying or harassment culture at the city of AFD. 15 of 17 respondents agreed that the city of Antigo did not discriminate against any employee.

The next section asked the ex-employees their opinions on the dealings and attitudes of the upper management for the most part the majority of respondents agreed that management was fair and gave equal treatment, was available to discuss job related issues, encouraged feedback and suggestions, maintained consistent policies and practices, provided recognition for achievements, provided opportunities to develop, provided constructive feedback, and clearly communicated decisions and how they would affect the ex-employees work

The next section asked the employees opinion on experience and effectiveness of the fire departments middle-management. For the most part the majority of respondents agreed that management did a good job and had sufficient knowledge of the job, was open to suggestions, recognize and acknowledge achievements, acknowledged employees contributions, provided constructive feedback, and maintain a professional relationship with the ex-employees. Where the ex-employees acknowledged weakness in management was in the overall experience in supervision, 10 of 17 ex-employees stated that management lacked experience in the supervisory roles that they hold.

The next section of the interview questionnaire asked the ex-employees opinion on their coworkers. In the first question 15 out of 16 rated their fellow employees easy to work with. While 13 out of 16 respondents believe that there is fellow employees are adequately trained.

The next section asked the employee about their perception of the quality of life provided by the city of Antigo. When asked whether he the city of Antigo has adequate shopping available 9 out of 17 respondents believe that Antigo either had substandard or no shopping available. When asked about the recreation available in the city of Antigo 14 out of 17 ex-employees indicated that yes there is adequate recreation in the city of Antigo. When asked whether Antigo was a safe place 16 out of 17 employees stated that the city of Antigo was in fact a safe place to live. 11 out of the 17 respondents also indicated that the school system was at an acceptable or better level. When asked if Antigo was a safe and good place to raise a family 15 out of 17 ex-employees believe that Antigo is a safe place to raise a family.

The final section of the interview gave the employee the ability to openly express any comments not covered by the questions above. All but 4 chose to add their responses when asked. One employee stated that the fire department needed to increase staffing so when there is a day off the firefighter did not have to worry about staffing transfers. This ex-employee also continues to state that the fire department should manage and deal with accordingly, department members that bully/harass and are constantly negative and not contributing to the better of the department. Another ex-employee stated that the fire department is in such a state of turmoil that it would be very difficult for any employee to stay unless it was their only option. This ex-employee also stated that the lack of recreation was a deciding factor in their relocation.

Continuing on with comments from another employee stated that there is not enough structure within the fire department effectively making no chance for advancement. They also stated that the management and leadership needs to defend their employees.

The next ex-employee gave items to try and help future retention and recruitment of employees. This employee while discussing AFD with several other ex-employees found that the residency rule may have limited the ability for the AFD to retain employees. In fact this employee directly indicated that they would have stayed if they could have lived closer to where they grown up. They also stated that a few other employees felt the same way about the department and the effect of residency upon it.

6 of the 13 people that chose to respondent to the open statement portion identified the lack of stability in the fire department as the main reason that they decided to relocate to another department. Another ex-employee stated that the low relative wage that the city of AFD offers in relationship to other areas of the state was the deciding factor in their relocation.

Current employee survey

The 1st question posed to the current employees that were selected to take part of the survey was basically asking them the reasons could give upon why they have decided to stay employed with AFD. Their answers included such reasons as AFD is closer to home, the quality of the organization, pay and benefits, but everyone but one stated the main reason they stayed with the city of AFD was for family and or personal reasons.

The 2nd question asked them to talk about the job itself. This question asked them about chances for advancement, the workload, if there was sufficient resources to accomplish the work, if they felt appreciated and listened to by fellow employees, what they felt about the training at the AFD, if we use their skills appropriately, and if they had access to adequate training and

development programs. All 5 respondents mentioned that their skills were being adequately used

and that the workload was manageable. 3 employees stated that there was sufficient opportunities

to advance while 2 respondents said the opportunity to advance were insufficient. In regards to

training, 3 out of 5 respondents indicated that training was insufficient at AFD, also 3

respondents stated that there were not sufficient staff to handle the workload.

The 3rd question dealt with salary and benefits. This section asked them to respond about

their feelings in many different categories. Some of these categories included whether the salary

was compensatory for the job worked. Whether the wages were paid on time, the benefits were

good, if there was quality health insurance, and whether AFD provided a good work life balance.

All 5 respondents agreed that the health insurance is adequate, that a good work life balance was

promoted and practiced, that the benefits were good, and the wages were paid on time. When it

came to the question of whether the salary was adequate relationship to their responsibilities 3

out of the 5 said no it wasn't, while 2 said the salary was adequate.

The next question dealt with employees view of AFD itself. When asked whether the

training was adequate 2 out of 3 said yes. When asked if AFD was a good environment for

working 3 out of 4 said yes. When asked whether they had adequate equipment to do the work

everyone responded yes. The respondents also agreed 4 out of 4 that they were able to get along

with fellow employees. 2 out of the 4 respondents indicated that there was bullying or

harassment present in the workplace. 3 out of 4 respondents also stated that the AFD was not

efficient in the way it operated.

The next question dealt with the employees view on the upper management. During the

survey process there were many divergent views of positive and negative when it came to the

upper management and how the employees view their interaction with them. Almost

unanimously the employees stated that the AFD upper management did not provide recognition for achievements. The majority also stated that upper management did not clearly communicate decisions, provide constructive feedback, and maintained consistent policies and practices. The employees did however state that the upper management was available to discuss job related issues, they encourage feedback and suggestions, gave opportunities to develop, and gave fair and equal treatment.

The next question dealt with the employees view on the middle management of the fire department. The firefighters thought that management was open to suggestions, recognize and acknowledge achievements, offered and promoted ways to develop, provided constructive feedback, clearly communicated decisions, and maintain a professional relationship with the employee. The majority of the employees did however state that the management did not acknowledge employees contributions was experienced with supervision, and was split 2 to 2 whether the management had sufficient knowledge to the job.

Going back to the city administrators view on quality of life and quality of perception the next question dealt with the employees view about city of Antigo's quality of life. When asked about the educational system in the city of Antigo 3 out of 5 rated the education either satisfactory or above satisfactory. 3 out of 5 respondents also indicated that Antigo's recreation was above satisfactory. The respondents also indicated they were well satisfied with the city services, healthcare, and safety provided by the city of Antigo. 4 out of 5 respondents stated that the job outlook and the shopping available in the city of Antigo was below satisfactory.

When given a chance to free talk on any subject they would like with regards to recruitment and retention with the fire department 3 out of the 4 respondents that chose to answer spoke upon one major subject. The subject is the stability of the department as a whole. In the

past 2 years the city's management has attempted to find other options for ambulance coverage that included eliminating the ambulance and privatizing it, also eliminating the fire department and replacing it with a volunteer service. These options investigated by the city of Antigo has caused many employees that would've generally not left, to leave. All 3 respondents indicated that the instability within the fire department caused by the investigation of the elimination of the fire department caused the morale of the fire department to decrease and the ability of the city of AFD to recruit and retain employees almost impossible.

The 4th respondent stated the problem within the AFD was the inability of management and upper management to provide oversight, follow-up, motivation, and discipline when necessary. This person sees the problem with morale as the management's inability to lead their employees. This respondent also continues on to state that consistency within the fire department and the ambulance service is nonexistent and is leading to the decline in quality and safety of the department.

Discussion

A review of the literature and the review of the results from the multiple forms used in the interviews and surveys was the basis for answering each research question. The literature does a good job addressing some of the research questions, but the interviews with the fire chief, director of public safety, and the city administrator was an attempt to identify and recognize what is currently in place to aid in the recruitment and retention of current and future employees.

The major section of the research had to do with finding out exactly why the employees that have left the AFD. When looking at the literature review it was other reasons why the respondents stated why employees choose to leave. The first reason poor leadership. According to Branham, the employees are looking for leadership they can trust. (Branham, 2001, p. 184).

When looking at the results from the management and the upper management questions that were posed to the ex-employees it does not seem that poor leadership was the main reasons that the employees decided to look for work elsewhere. In fact with a pretty good majorities the ex-employees were satisfied with not only the upper management but also the middle management of the AFD. Conversely, they did indicate that they believe that the middle management was not experienced in supervision.

Another major cause for job relocations was poor job satisfaction. Even though it is thought that pay and benefits had a lot to do a job satisfaction our literature review pointed otherwise. Even though wages are often tied to job satisfaction Abbott's research has explained that generally when there is a work for wages motivation it is generally a poor method of employee retention (Abbott, 2006, p. 189). When the ex-employees were given the chance to elaborate on job satisfaction the results again did not indicate that job satisfaction was one of the major reasons why our ex-employees left the AFD. In fact, the majority of people did indicate that the AFD was a good and positive environment to work in, was able to get along with all the other employees working with them, and the AFD was efficient in its dealings.

Often compensation is believed to be the biggest motivation for employees to move from one job to another. Our literature review stated otherwise. The literature review stated that it's often not a major factor in the choice whether to stay or go for an employee. According to Branham 12% of the employees that left employment cited low wages as the main reason for leaving their current position (Branham, 2005, p. 24). The ex-employees respondents when asked about pay and benefits agreed that the benefits were good, there was a good work life balance, and the fire department health insurance was adequate for their needs. When it came to the pay comparable to others and the wage comparable for the work done overall the respondents

believed that AFD fell short in their expectations. It would be expected that more people during the open answer section would indicate that pay and benefits were a reason why they left, but none of the respondents indicated that as a reason.

According to the literature review the lack of room for personal and professional growth is a major contributor to lower retention. When questioning the ex-employees the great majority stated that there was not sufficient room for advancement. Maslow states that as a basic need people need to feel esteem in their life and one of the ways that a person can feel this esteem is from the workplace by receiving praise, increase benefits, promotions, and professional growth (Maslow, 1943, p. 10). Currently, at the AFD there is one chief officer and 3 fire lieutenants. At the time of promotion the lieutenants two were 32 years old and one was 42 years old. The fire chief at the time of his promotion was 37. The quandary and dilemmas that AFD faces is the lack of professional growth in the department. If you look at the 4 management positions they could very well could provide no promotions for professional growth for somewhere between 17 and 21 years. AFD has several employees that due to circumstances and seniority's will never have the opportunity to be promoted. Both the generation X. generation and the millennial generation indicates that available advancement in their career is the number one priority in choosing an employer. (Meister & Willeyard, 2010, p. 191). Whether they work hard, participate, and do their duty as a paramedic firefighter there will be no positions for them to grow into. It is readily apparent that our ex-employees do find the lack of professional growth as a major contributor to the employees leaving AFD for other jobs. In 1999 there were 8 promotable positions and allowed people who excelled and work hard a chance for professional growth. Due to some restructuring and attrition that number is down to the current 4 that is present at the AFD.

One of the surprises that came up through the interview process was the indication from the ex-employees and current employees that Antigo may have a harassing or bullying type environment. One employee directly mentioned it during the open question section and several employees mentioned it during the specific question section. Either way it is clearly a problem that needs to be addressed. A harassing environment will not only reduce morale and make it difficult to work every day, but it will destroy any effort to improve retention and recruitment. Abbott and Dawson said employees are just looking for a healthy work environment that includes a work environment that fosters system wide trust and the ability to communicate openly and honestly up and down the employment ladder of the company (Dawson & Abbott, 2011, p. 292).   Every fire department has a semblance of hazing that goes on, but it is believed that the statements made by the ex-employees are talking about harassment that goes well beyond hazing. The literature review directly talks about the importance of a safe workplace. Branham stresses in her book that abusive managers or toxic environments will not be stood for by the employees (Branham, 2005, p. 13). The indication that the ex-employees gave about a harassing atmosphere directly impacts the ability of AFD to provide a safe workplace for the new employee and the veteran employee. It would be myopic to think that the concerns of the ex-employees and the feelings that they were harassed or bullied would not transfer into the current employees.

For everything that we are able to control or repair at the AFD there are several things that we cannot control. The majority of the reasons people leave rest in the domain of things that cannot be changed. Probably the largest contributor to the exit of any ex-employee has shown to be the employees wishes to work closer to where they grown up. The majority of people that have left the AFD has taken a job within 30 miles of their original residence they had before

taking the firefighter paramedic job at AFD. AFD cannot change the drive of somebody who wants to work closer to where they grown up.

Another major contributor to the relocation of employees is the inability for their spouses or significant others to find meaningful employment in the area. The career opportunities in the city of Antigo for college-level graduates are hard to find. The major employer in the city of Antigo is either the city of Antigo itself or the local hospital, Langlade Hospital. It is hard to identify one case where an employee who was married, from another community, and moved here for a job with the city of Antigo for department and has remained with the department. Clearly discrimination against married individuals is something that is illegal and can be done nor can the interviewers ask about family or kids. Until the city of Antigo grow some more jobs that can satisfy college-level workers it will be difficult for us to retain employees that are in relationships at the time of appointment.

Looking at the literature review it is clear that the employees want job security. In Maslow's hierarchy of needs, Maslow speaks upon the importance of the theory of an orderly predictable world (Maslow, 1943, p. 7). At this time AFD cannot provide the security necessary to retain and recruit employees to the fire department. The fire department will always be able to find applicants that are willing to come and work at the AFD, but often they are unwilling to stay using AFD as a stepping stone for career advancement. The city of Antigo has recognized the damage done by the instability caused by system wide decisions and the city of Antigo is attempting to repair and reconcile the instability that has plagued the city of AFD for the past 3 years.

Another item that employees ask from their employers is flexibility. Looking at the questions and answers in the interviews and surveys it is apparent that for the most part the

current employees and the ex-employees are both satisfied with the work life balance that AFD gives to their employees, and also they believe that the flexibility given to them from the fire department is more than adequate.

One of the items that appeared in the literature review and is not really covered by the research questions is the impact of the generational change that comes with each generation. The newer generation that is now entering the workplace will often be a transient employee. It is less often to see an employee spend their entire career at one location. In *The 2020 Workplace* the authors compare and contrast the different attitudes of past generations; where the traditionalists picked a job that would suit them for their career the generation X. and the Millennials picked jobs that they can spend a few years and then would move on. In the millennial generation there is very little career loyalty (Meister & Willeyard, 2010, p. 18). It needs to be recognized that the new employees that the city of Antigo may hire will not see any job as a lifelong job and the recruitment and retention of those employees may not necessarily be because of things that AFD can or cannot control, but may be a generational change that we need to not only identify but to adapt to. This is segment that as an employer training would assist the upper management and the middle-management to understand how to get the most out of the new generation and how to temper expectations to what should be expected from the new generation.

<h3 style="text-align:center">Recommendations</h3>

This applied research paper has done a couple things. The 1st thing it did was to reaffirm some of the reasons that the AFD believed we were having trouble retaining employees. This included employees leaving for jobs closer to their home, spouses unable to find meaningful work, and better pay and benefits. The importance of this research paper was to identify the

things that we didn't expect to see and a couple items became apparent and definitely needs to be addressed.

      1. The implication that the AFD has a culture that lends to bullying is a contributor to the Antigo part from his inability to retain personnel.

      2. The lack of personal and professional growth has led employees to leave the Antigo fire department to other fire departments that offer more personal and professional growth.

      3. The instability caused by the threat of completely laying off and disassembling the full-time fire service and paramedic service has become the number 1 current reason why employees are leaving the AFD.

      4. The workload caused by having one shift understaffed has been indicated as a reason why people chose to leave the AFD.

The respondents claiming that the AFD has a bullying or harassing culture is the primary change that should be made to help retain employees. May it be through training or education the workplace should be a safe place to work. Any bullying or harassment should not be tolerated and needs immediate correction. This job should start the upper management of the city and should reach throughout the city government including all members of AFD.

The reduction from 8 promotable positions to 4 promotable positions has left the city of Antigo employees in a stagnant position not allowing hard work to be recognized other than a general at

a boy. In most fire departments rank is given to people who have shown excellent leadership, the ability to work through complex problems and the ability to work well with and through people. Currently, at AFD even if an employee excels at everything and they would make a great fire officer there is an inability to promote those people due to the sheer lack of promotable positions. The city of AFD should look into a 2 tiered supervisory system on each shift. This would allow up to 7 promotable positions and will allow the city of Antigo to recognize and identify employees that are meeting or exceeding the standards set for a company officer.

It would be a hard sell to try and get the survivors of the Titanic back onto the ship after being struck by the iceberg. In essence the AFD has hit it's iceberg. Early in the year it was debated whether the fire department was dealt a fatal blow. Luckily, through the support of city government, the management of the city, and the fire department this instability has started to mend. The road to repair the damage done is going to be a long and arduous one that with no doubt will have setbacks, but some positive steps already have been made to increase the stability within the fire department. Until this instability is a long faded memory it will greatly decrease the amount of people that the AFD can retain and lower the amount of firefighter paramedics we can recruit. Even though, currently, this instability is the major cause of turnover at the AFD it is listed 3rd due to the fact that the city of Antigo has started to repair the instability.

Having one shift understaffed to the point that a simple 2 in 2 out interior attack can generally not be had with the initial company has impacted our ability to retain employees. During the open question session with the ex-employees one employee stated that the constant pressure to take off-duty transfers and to come in when emergencies demand more personnel is ruining the firefighters work life balance The work like disruption has created enough stress for

several employees to look for another job. Currently one shift is running one person short, but a

SAFER grant was just submitted to help rehire that position.

     The end recommendation for the city of AFD is fourfold.

1.   Correct the bullying and harassing atmosphere that is present the city of Antigo fire

     department.

2.   Increase the amount of multiple positions from 4 to 7.

3.   Continue to repair the job instability at the AFD

     4.   Use the safer grant to re-staff the short platoon.

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Appendices

Appendix A: Past Employees questionnaire

1. What were the reasons for leaving the City of Antigo Fire Department?
    Higher pay
    Better benefits
    Improved work life balance
    Career change
    Conflict with other employees
    Conflict with managers
    Company instability
    Better career opportunity
    Closer to home
    Family and/or personal reasons
    Leadership problems
    Move to a busier department

2. Please Rank the Job Itself
    Job was challenging
    There were sufficient opportunities for advancement
    Workload was manageable
    Sufficient resources and staff were available
    Your colleagues listened and appreciated your suggestions
    Training was adequate
    Your skills were effectively used
    You had access to adequate training and development programs

3. Salary and Benefits
    The salary was adequate in relation to responsibilities
    Wages were paid on time
    Other benefits were good
    Work-life balance was promoted and practiced
    The fire departments health insurance was adequate

4. The City of Antigo
    When you started, did the training week help
    Was a good and positive environment to work in
    Had adequate equipment to do the work
    Got along well with other employees
    There were sufficient staff to cover the work
    The company was efficient in it's dealings
    Internal communication worked well
    There was no bullying or harassment
    The business did not discriminate against any employee

5. Upper Management
    Gave fair and equal treatment
    Was available to discuss job related issues
    Encouraged feedback and suggestions
    Maintained consistent policies and practices
    Provided recognition for achievements
    Gave opportunities to develop
    Provided constructive feedback
    Clearly communicated decisions and how they would effect your work

6. Management
    Had sufficient knowledge of the job
    Is experienced in supervision
    Was open to suggestions
    Recognized and acknowledged achievements
    Acknowledged employees contributions
    Offered and promoted ways to develop
    Provided constructive feedback
    Clearly communicated management decisions and how they would effect your work
    Maintained a professional relationship with you

7. Co-Workers
    Fellow employees were easy to work with
    Fellow employees are adequately trained

8. The City Itself
    Antigo has adequate Shopping
    Antigo has adequate Recreation
    Antigo is a safe place
    Antigo has good schools
    Antigo is a good place to raise a family

9. What could be done to improve retention of current employees?

10. Other reasons that you ended employment with the City of Antigo?

Appendix B: Current Employees

1. What are the reasons you have chosen to stay at the City of Antigo Fire Department?
    Pay
    Benefits
    Good work\home balance
    The quality of organization
    Fellow employees
    Management competence
    Stability
    Loss of seniority benefits
    Best career opportunity
    Closer to home
    Family and/or personal reasons
    Good Run Volume

2. Please Rank the Job Itself
    Job was challenging
    There were sufficient opportunities for advancement
    Workload was manageable
    Sufficient resources and staff were available
    Your colleagues listened and appreciated your suggestions
    Training was adequate
    Your skills were effectively used
    You had access to adequate training and development programs

3. Salary and Benefits
    The salary was adequate in relation to responsibilities
    Wages were paid on time
    Other benefits were good
    Work-life balance was promoted and practiced
    The fire departments health insurance was adequate

4. The City of Antigo
    When you started, did the training week help
    Was a good and positive environment to work in
    Had adequate equipment to do the work
    Got along well with other employees
    There were sufficient staff to cover the work
    The company was efficient in it's dealings
    Internal communication worked well
    There was no bullying or harassment
    The business did not discriminate against any employee

5. Upper Management

Gave fair and equal treatment
Was available to discuss job related issues
Encouraged feedback and suggestions
Maintained consistent policies and practices
Provided recognition for achievements
Gave opportunities to develop
Provided constructive feedback
Clearly communicated decisions and how they would effect your work

6. Management
Had sufficient knowledge of the job
Is experienced in supervision
Was open to suggestions
Recognized and acknowledged achievements
Acknowledged employees contributions
Offered and promoted ways to develop
Provided constructive feedback
Clearly communicated management decisions and how they would effect your work
Maintained a professional relationship with you

7. Co-Workers
Fellow employees were easy to work with
Fellow employees are adequately trained

8. What is your families opinion of the City's
Education
Recreation
Job Outlook
Shopping
City Services
Healthcare
Safety

9. What could be done to improve retention of current employees?

Appendix C: Fire Chief \ Director of Public Safety Interview Questions

Director of Public Safety
Fire Chief

What has the fire department done to retain employees?

What programs does the fire department have in place to retain employees?

What guidelines does the fire department have to retain employees?

What does the fire department do to improve employment stability?

How does the fire department think the compensation package affects employee retention

How does the fire department think the health package affects employee retention?

One of the reasons employees give for leaving is poor management, what is the fire department doing to improve the effectiveness of the management.

What programs or protocols do the fire department to improve the safety of the employee?

What programs does the fire department have in place to ensure career growth?

Does the fire department offer enough advancement opportunities to help retain personnel?

What programs does the fire department have to recognize employees?

Appendix D: Director of Administrative Services Interview

1. What has the City of Antigo done to help retain employees?

2. What specific programs does the City of Antigo have in place to retain employees?

3. What guidelines or procedures does the City of Antigo have to retain employees?

4. What does the City of Antigo do to improve employment stability?

5. How does the City of Antigo think the compensation package affects employee retention?

6. How does the City of Antigo think the health package affects employee retention?

7. One of the reasons most public and private sector employees gives for leaving is poor management, what is the City of Antigo doing to improve the effectiveness of the management?

8. What programs or protocols does the City of Antigo have to improve the safety of the employee?

9. What programs does the City of Antigo have in place to ensure career growth?

10. Does the City of Antigo offer enough advancement opportunities to help retain personnel?

11. What programs does the City of Antigo have to recognize employees?

Appendix E: Ex-Employee list

Rank	New Department	Year	Experience
Firefighter	Appleton	1992	2
Chief	Baraboo	1995	3
Firefighter	Green Bay	1995	2
Firefighter	Disability	1997	5
Firefighter	Neenah/ Menasha	1997	1
Chief	Neenah/ Menasha	1997	2
Firefighter	West Bend	1997	3
Firefighter	Disability	2003	5
Firefighter	Eau Claire	1998	1
Firefighter	Green Bay	1998	2
Firefighter	Kenosha	1998	2
Firefighter	Neenah/ Menasha	1998	1
Firefighter	De Pere	1999	1
Firefighter	Green Bay	1999	1
Firefighter	Green Bay	1999	1
Firefighter	Neenah/ Menasha	1999	1
Firefighter	Neenah/ Menasha	1999	2
Firefighter	Oshkosh	1999	1
Firefighter	Quit	1999	1
Firefighter	West Bend/Dissmissed	2001	1
Firefighter	Appleton	2002	2
Firefighter	Neenah/ Menasha	2003	1
Firefighter	Neenah/ Menasha	2003	1
Firefighter	Dismissed	2004	4
Chief	Plover	2004	6
Deputy Chief	Rib Mountain	2004	15
Firefighter	Resigned	2006	7
Firefighter	Oshkosh	2007	4
Firefighter	Sheboygan	2007	1
Firefighter	Stevens Point	2007	1
Firefighter	Las Vegas	2010	3
Deputy Chief	Oregon Tech	2010	2
Firefighter	West Bend	2010	11
Firefighter	Aspirus Medi Vac	2012	11
Firefighter	Green Bay	2012	3
Firefighter	Green Bay	2012	3
Firefighter	Wausau	2012	11
Firefighter	Merrill	2013	1

Firefighter	Rhinelander	2013	1
Firefighter	Rhinelander	2013	1
Firefighter	Merrill	2013	1
Firefighter	Wauwautosa	2013	1