

Preparing Shift Personnel for Administrative Day Staff Positions at West Pierce Fire & Rescue

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Certification Statement

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

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Abstract

Succession planning is one of the most important aspects of organizational development. West Pierce Fire & Rescue (WPFR) is continually challenged with developing employees for day staff positions. Over the next five years, WPFR anticipates a number of retirements in day staff positions, requiring the promotion of several shift personnel. The problem was shift personnel have historically been reluctant to accept a day staff assignment and when they do, they often struggle in their new role. Without an adequate pool of properly trained individuals to select from, WPFR will suffer a significant leadership vacuum while newly promoted individuals struggle to adapt to their new role. The author used descriptive research for the purpose of determining strategies the department can employ to encourage more employees to consider a staff position on days, as well as, improve the overall success of those who promote. The author carried out the research by performing a literature review, conducting a survey, performing data analysis and conducting personal interviews. The research answered four questions. (a) Why do firefighters have a reluctance to accept a staff position on days? (b) What training do firefighters think they need in order to be prepared for a staff position on days? (c) What training do administrators think firefighters need in order to be prepared for a staff position on days? (d) What have been the largest challenges faced by shift personnel after taking a staff position on days? The results indicated WPFR is not adequately preparing personnel for day staff positions. Recommendations were provided for developing a comprehensive succession and mentorship program for prospective day staff candidates, as well as existing day staff employees. Through this effort, effective plans can be established to maintain leadership at all levels of the organization with no loss of operational continuity.

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Throughout the country, every business sector is seeing a graying of their workforce. Baby Boomers, those born between 1946 and 1964, make up close to 45% of the workforce (Smith, 2014). Statistically, the United States will see 10,000 baby boomers turn 65 every day through 2030 (Moeller, 2013). As the baby boomer generation reaches retirement, businesses will see massive turnover in their workforce. Additionally, many employees on the leading edge of generation X, those born between 1965 and 1980, are not far from retirement. This is much more prominent in public sector jobs, such as the fire service, where employees can begin drawing a pension after only 20-25 years.

When employees leave a job, they take a significant amount of institutional knowledge with them. Rarely do organizations have adequate systems in place to capture this knowledge (Pena, 2013). In the case of older employees, quite often they hold positions in senior management and leadership. Loss of this key leadership results in a significant loss of historical perspective and vital business practices.

Planning for leadership succession is a critical challenge for every organization. The best organizations are very strategic in their leadership planning, recognizing it as an ongoing process rather than an ad hoc activity (Cascio, 2011). Unfortunately, formal succession, mentoring and professional development programs within the fire service are very rare (Legoudes, n.d.).

In the fire service, senior leadership tends to work more traditional office hours, while emergency response personnel tend to work some form of 24-hour shift work. In most organizations, day staff positions engage in more managerial functions while 24-hour shift employees are focused strictly on emergency response. Moving from emergency response work to management is a significant change. Employees are quite often reluctant to make this change

for a variety of reasons. Organizations lacking an effective training, development and mentoring program to prepare internal candidates to take leadership and managerial positions are often forced to go outside the organization to fill key leadership positions (Alyn, 2010).

West Pierce Fire & Rescue, like any other organization, is constantly challenged with developing an effective employee replacement plan to address the constant attrition of senior leaders throughout the organization. West Pierce Fire & Rescue anticipates a number of retirements in staff officer positions, over the next five years. Due to this, it will be necessary to promote several shift personnel into staff positions on days. The problem is shift personnel have historically been reluctant to accept a day staff assignment and when they do, they often struggle in their new role. Without an adequate pool of properly trained individuals to select from, West Pierce Fire & Rescue will suffer a significant leadership vacuum while newly promoted individuals struggle to adapt to their new role. The author used descriptive research for the purpose of determining strategies the department can employ that will encourage more employees to consider a staff position on days, as well as, improve the overall success of those who promote. The author carried out the research by performing a literature review, conducting a survey, performing data analysis and conducting personal interviews. The research answered four questions. (a) Why do firefighters have a reluctance to accept a staff position on days? (b) What training do firefighters think they need in order to be prepared for a staff position on days? (c) What training do administrators think firefighters need in order to be prepared for a staff position on days? (d) What have been the largest challenges faced by shift personnel after taking a staff position on days?

Background and Significance

Located in Pierce County, Washington, West Pierce Fire & Rescue was formed in 2011 through the merger of the Lakewood Fire Department, Pierce County Fire District #2 and the University Place Fire Department, Pierce County Fire District #3. West Pierce Fire & Rescue is an all hazards fire department, providing services to the cities of Lakewood, University Place and the Town of Steilacoom. Pierce County Fire District #2 was formed in 1940 and Pierce County Fire District #3 was formed in 1941. The City of University Place was incorporated in 1995 with the City of Lakewood incorporating the following year. Both cities have been annexed into the fire district. West Pierce Fire & Rescue is an independent Washington State taxing authority governed by a Board of Fire Commissioners rather than a municipal fire department governed by the cities. In 2012, West Pierce Fire & Rescue signed a ten year contract for services with the Town of Steilacoom. Steilacoom became the third municipality to be served by the district, but they are not annexed as a part of the district. West Pierce Fire & Rescue covers approximately 31 square miles and serves a population of slightly less than 100,000 people (West Pierce Fire & Rescue [WPFR], 2014).

With a population of approximately 60,000 the City of Lakewood is the second largest city in Pierce County (<https://www.cityoflakewood.us/>). The City of University Place has a population of approximately 31,500, making it the fourth largest city in Pierce County (www.cityofup.com/). With a population of approximately 6,100, the Town of Steilacoom is the smallest community served by West Pierce Fire & Rescue (<http://steilacoom.org/index.html>).

West Pierce Fire & Rescue holds a Washington State Surveying and Rating Bureau Public Fire Protection Class 3 rating. The department provides fire protection, advanced life support medical response, medical transport, technical rescue, marine rescue, hazardous

materials response, code enforcement, public education, fire prevention, and regional fire dispatch service for 13 fire departments throughout Pierce County (WPFR, 2014).

West Pierce Fire & Rescue currently has 206 employees, making it the third largest fire department in Pierce County. The fire district is bordered on the north and northeast by the City of Tacoma, east and southeast by Central Pierce Fire & Rescue, on the south by Joint Base Lewis-McChord and on the west by Puget Sound. The Tacoma Fire Department, Central Pierce Fire & Rescue, and West Pierce Fire & Rescue represent the three largest fire departments in Pierce County. The three departments cover the majority of the metropolitan area, serving approximately 65% of the total population in the County.

Because of its size and location within Pierce County, West Pierce Fire & Rescue is frequently involved in regional issues at the County, tri-county (Pierce, King and Snohomish Counties) and State level. With three different city governments within its boundaries, the department is often engaged in a variety of political and policy issues within the municipal government of these communities. Quite often, West Pierce Fire & Rescue also becomes involved with federal issues due to its border with Joint Base Lewis McChord and its contract for fire protection services with the Veterans Administration American Lake Campus, just south of the fire district.

Due to the level of involvement the department has in local, state and federal issues, West Pierce Fire & Rescue administrative staff are routinely challenged with very complex political and legislative issues, along with the normal operational and budgetary challenges they face internally within the department. The dynamic nature of a staff level position is challenging in any fire department. Adding multiple layers of regional politics across several municipalities

makes the work exponentially challenging. Adequately preparing employees to take on such a role in the organization is vital to the overall success of West Pierce Fire & Rescue.

Currently, West Pierce Fire & Rescue has 18 employees working a day shift assignment in a staff position at the rank of Captain or higher. Battalion Chiefs and Captains manage work in the Training, EMS, Communications and Prevention Divisions of the department. The executive staff officers are comprised of one Fire Chief, one Deputy Chief and four Assistant Chiefs. The department currently has Captain vacancies in both the Training and Prevention Divisions, with an expected Battalion Chief vacancy in the EMS Division by mid-2015. In the next two to five years, the department anticipates between two and four vacancies within the executive staff. At a minimum, the department is facing turnover in five staff positions over the next eighteen months.

With several vacancies expected in staff positions, it will be incumbent upon West Pierce Fire & Rescue to first, attract enough qualified individuals to fill all of the vacancies and second, to provide them with the appropriate training and education to be successful in their new role. Lacking a strategy for filling vacancies and training new staff, West Pierce Fire & Rescue will find it increasingly difficult to be successful as an organization and satisfy the expectations of their constituents and regional partners.

Preparing for and appropriately managing change in an organization are key subject areas within the Executive Leadership course provided by the National Fire Academy. By performing an analysis of why individuals are reluctant to accept staff positions, as well as determining how to help new staff members to be successful in their new role will help West Pierce Fire & Rescue successfully respond to the changes it will be facing over the next several years. Preparing for

and adapting to these changes in the organization will align West Pierce Fire & Rescue with two of the strategic goals of the United States Fire Administration.

- Improve local planning and preparedness.
- Improve the fire and emergency services' professional status.

Literature Review

Employment of people age 55 and older has reached an all-time high. In 2010, over 40% of those over age 55 were still working, and by 2016, it is estimated that over one-third of the total U.S. workforce will be over the age of 50 (Tishman et al., 2012). This “baby boomer” generation, those born between 1946 and 1964, are contributing to a steady graying of the workforce and are expected to retire in increasing numbers over the next several years.

Depending on pension requirements, Generation X, those born between 1965 and 1980 may not be far behind the baby boomer generation in their decision to retire (Davidson, Lepeak, & Newman, 2007). This is much more likely to be the case in public sector jobs, such as the fire service, where employees can retire and begin drawing a pension after only 20-25 years.

In Washington State, firefighters in the Law Enforcement Officers and Fire Fighters Plan II (LEOFF II) pension program can begin drawing a retirement pension at the age of 53. If they are willing to accept penalties they could begin drawing a pension at the age of 50. Generation X employees will begin reaching the age of 50 in 2015, and the age of 53 in 2018, while the youngest baby boomers will reach the age of 55 only one year later. By 2020, all of the baby boomers in the fire service in Washington State will be well beyond their eligible retirement age.

For many beyond the age of 53, the most significant factor keeping them on the job is their inability to attain reasonably priced medical insurance. A recent study of 1,263 local and government employees across the nation found that 75% plan to retire later, citing health care

costs as one of the main drivers of their decision (Farmer, 2014). It is unknown yet how the Affordable Care Act will impact this trend. However, it is likely that if affordable, post-retirement health care was made available, the retirement rate among firefighters in Washington State over the age of 53 would increase.

With a significant percentage of the workforce moving towards retirement, public sector agencies will be faced with the challenge of mitigating the loss of key staff and the years of experience and accrued knowledge they will take with them (Smith, 2012). “Older workers are individuals who, for the most part, are in senior staff/management positions, and whose retirement represents a tremendous loss of institution memory and knowledge of proprietary practices.” (Tishman et al., 2012, p. 4). Managing this loss requires a pro-active effort to transfer business processes, institutional practices and historical knowledge. Without adequate planning, businesses will be faced with severe breakdowns in business continuity and knowledge (Pena, 2013).

This is especially true in the fire service. Senior administrative staff positions are often held by older workers. Many firefighters enter the fire service at a relatively young age and spend the majority of their career as a first line responder. The decision to move into an administrative position is often put off until much later in their career, often seen as a final phase before retirement. “This is indicative of the pervasive attitude that 40-hour positions are not for the young within our ranks, but for the older personnel looking to extend their careers” (Legoudes, n.d., p. 32).

Unlike many private sector jobs, firefighters tend to be very loyal to their organization with very few choosing to seek employment elsewhere. Therefore, even when a firefighter promotes to a staff position early in their career they tend to remain in their position or a similar

staff position until retirement. In either case, when the employee retires, they take a significant amount of institutional knowledge with them, creating a vacuum in the administrative staff of the organization. When multiple employees retire in a relatively short time, it can create a critical drain of organizational knowledge and key business practices.

Effective leadership succession planning is vital to every organization. Organizations that have the most success in developing leadership do so in a very strategic way. Succession planning and leadership development are recognized as ongoing processes integrated into their business practices, rather than an ad-hoc task to be performed as needed (Cascio, 2011). In order to be effective, “leadership development should be strategic, not random and unfocused” (Yost & Plunkett, 2009, p. 1). Unfortunately, formal succession, mentoring and professional development programs, within the fire service, are extremely rare (Legoudes, n.d.). Additionally, when a department does have a formal career development plan, it is usually seen as inadequate. Schneider (n.d.) found satisfaction of fire department career development plans to be extremely low. Of the departments surveyed, 50% rated their program as only moderately satisfactory and 40% rated them below satisfactory or not satisfactory at all.

Further challenging formal succession planning in the fire service is the organizational structure and promotional processes. In traditional succession planning, an executive would begin planning a replacement no less than five years in advance by selecting an appropriate employee and implementing a comprehensive development and training plan. This is rarely a realistic option in the world of public safety due to collective bargaining agreements, unions, guilds, civil service and the nature of the work. This often leads to a situation where more time is spent trying to determine the process for filling the vacancy and less time is spent determining how to effectively prepare the employee for the position (Sharp, 2009).

Promotions in the fire service have traditionally been determined based on factors such as age and years of service, rather than skills, training, education and experience. This trend is beginning to change as departments begin to acknowledge the best candidates may not be those who have been around the longest, but rather those who have gone above and beyond to get the experience and training needed to be adequately prepared for the position (George, 2014). Unfortunately, labor contracts and civil service rules are slow to be adapted to these changes.

A significant amount of time can be spent preparing an employee to take on a key administrative position, but if promotional processes are tied to collective bargaining agreements and/or civil service rules that restrict the employee from being selected to fill the position, all of the mentorship and training is lost with minimal benefit to the organization. If employees can't be pre-identified for promotions, it becomes necessary to develop a generic succession plan aimed at a broad group of candidates, often diminishing the value of the training and greatly increasing the costs of the program.

Another significant challenge to succession and mentorship plans is the difficulty of getting firefighters encouraged to take an administrative position in the organization. In most fire departments moving from shift work as an emergency responder to a day shift assignment as an administrator is a significant life change. The Social Readjustment Rating Scale, designed by Holmes and Rahe in 1967, lists "changing to a different line of work" as number 18 out of 43 major stressful life events, just below the "death of a close friend" (McLeod, 2010). There are a variety of reasons people are fearful of changing jobs. Some of the most common reasons are fear of the unknown, fear of failure, fear of success, fear of what others might think, and fear of making a bad career change choice (Bussin, n.d.).

In the fire service, firefighters in the United States tend to work some form of shift work. The vast majority work a 24-hour shift schedule allowing for multiple days off and significant flexibility. On the other hand, administrative positions in the fire service are more closely aligned with traditional business hours, eight to 10 hours per day, four to five days per week. This drastic difference in work schedule only adds to the anxiety already presented by the overall change in job function. Increasingly firefighters are discouraged from the idea of seeking a promotion. In contrast to shift work, they see administrative positions as nothing more than long hours, ugly politics and public attacks for often little to no increase in pay, due to their ability to gain overtime pay on shift (Metcalf, 2013).

In the fire service firefighters are often reluctant to leave shift work for an administrative position on days, citing concerns over a lack of comradery, esprit de corps, not being able to respond to emergencies and negative perceptions of administrative work (Davis, n.d.). The flexibility of the shift work, close relationships developed with shift mates, and the excitement of emergency response are seen as significant benefits most firefighters are unwilling to give up. If they do seek a promotion, they overwhelmingly seek out opportunities on shift rather than a day staff assignment. Fire departments are increasingly trying to find ways to make day staff positions more attractive, but it is extremely difficult to outpace the benefits provided by shift work.

The lack of formal succession, mentoring and professional development programs, within the fire service coupled with a fear of changing careers and reluctance to leave shift work, often leads to a lack of qualified candidates to fill administrative positions. Increasingly across the country, fire departments are seeing a declining number of personnel who are qualified and interested in promoting or taking a staff assignment (Prziborowski, 2013). This situation leaves

fire departments with two options, promote personnel who are not fully qualified for the position or go outside of the organization to find someone with the required skills and training.

Depending on the position being filled, collective bargaining agreements and/or civil service rules may not allow the department to look outside of the department to find qualified candidates. In these situations, the department has to accept the talent pool provided and in many cases, where very few or possibly only one candidate applies, they are forced to promote someone who is far from being qualified for the position. In cases such as this, morale can be hurt significantly, as employees lacking the necessary experience and competencies are promoted into positions they have no business being in (Alyn, 2012).

Lacking an adequate pool of qualified candidates, departments often open up their promotional process to candidates outside of the organization (Alyn, 2012). Organizations forced to go outside to find candidates who are adequately prepared for a senior executive position often do so at a price. While they may have all of the requisite skills for the position, they have little or no familiarity with the internal workings and culture of the organization, the community, the political environment and depending on their background, labor/management experience with unions and guilds. All of this education can be gained over time, but it can often delay organizational development and alter organizational culture.

In order to avoid the need to seek candidates outside of the organization, departments need to establish effective succession and mentorship plans. There is no one thing that makes up a quality leadership development program. In order to be successful, succession and mentorship programs need to be continually managed, multidimensional programs. Leadership development programs need core training regarding department expectations for staff officers. It is important

employees understand what training is required for their success and what they should expect in their new role (Brophy, 2013).

In many leadership development programs there is a disconnect between the training the organization believes an employee needs and what the employee believes they need to be successful. As newly promoted employees move into a day staff position, they quickly learn the experience they have from being a first line responder does little to prepare them for an administrative position (Hagen, 2014). As opposed to first line emergency response personnel with no supervisory responsibilities, administrators need to have a unique set of skills in areas of interpersonal communication, conflict resolution and personnel management. Additionally, without being provided appropriate training and mentorship, new fire service leaders tend to have little to no background in areas such as budgeting, human resources and legal issues (Pianezza, 2010).

In addition to internal training and education programs, much can be gained through formal education. Increasingly, college education is becoming an expectation in the workforce. By 2018, it is estimated that 63% of all job openings will require some level of college education (Amdur, 2013). Expectations are even higher for senior executive positions, especially in the private sector. Increasingly fire departments are requiring a Bachelor's degree as the minimum educational requirement. On the other hand, firefighter entry requirements are predominantly no more than a high school degree. The only college level education frequently required is EMT certification. This creates a significant educational gap between entry level firefighters and senior administrative positions. Adequately preparing employees to move from a first responder role to an administrative role has to include formal education as a way of closing this gap.

Formalizing a succession plan that incorporates college education programs can be extremely challenging. Two of the biggest challenges facing the fire service are limited time and financial resources. Departments are constantly struggling to meet all of their mandated training obligations while facing a continual increase in service demand. Additionally, departments are being challenged to provide services with increasingly limited budgets. Incorporating college education into department succession plans requires additional time and money, both of which are scarce.

In summary, research shows there to be a significant graying of the American workforce. Over the next several years, businesses will see baby boomers retiring in record numbers. This is especially true in the public sector, specifically in the fire service, where retirement systems provide pension benefits at a relatively young age as compared to the general population.

Along with the retirement of key staff members, fire departments will see the loss of significant institutional knowledge. In the fire service, administrative staff members tend to be senior employees, close to retirement. With retirement, they will leave a vacuum of business knowledge and operational practices that will need to be filled by their successors.

Managing these losses effectively will require departments to have comprehensive succession plans in place. Unfortunately, research shows succession planning to be exceedingly rare in the fire service and the few programs that do exist are viewed as being only marginally successful. Research identifies several reasons succession plans are unsuccessful in the fire service. Unions, guilds, collective bargaining agreements and civil service rules often make it difficult to identify successors in advance. Additionally, there is often a stigma associated with day staff positions making first responders reluctant to move out of their comfort zones and leave shift work for a day assignment.

Between restrictive promotional processes and fears of pursuing a promotion to an administrative day position, fire departments are finding it increasingly difficult to attract a large enough pool of qualified candidates to fill key administrative positions. Lacking enough candidates, departments are forced to promote unqualified candidates or hire someone from outside of the organization. Both of which create a significant break down of morale, jeopardizing overall organizational success.

Avoiding this scenario requires a department to take a proactive approach, implementing a comprehensive, ongoing succession and mentorship plan designed to help employees understand what to expect in an administrative position and train them on the specific job skills needed to be successful. Additionally, the succession plan needs to address the educational gap in higher education between entry level employees and senior staff officer positions. Implementing a comprehensive succession and mentorship plan to address the expected loss of key staff officers requires a significant commitment of time and money, both of which many fire departments find in short supply.

Procedures

Research for this applied research project initially began, in May of 2014, at the Learning Resource Center on the campus of the National Fire Academy, in Emmitsburg, Maryland. Utilizing the card catalog, a search was performed with the keywords succession planning, mentorship, staff development, educational requirements, career development, leadership development, chief officer minimum qualifications, administrative positions and changing careers.

From April 2014 through November 2014, numerous internet searches were conducted utilizing Google.com. Search terms included U. S. workforce, baby boomers, graying

workforce, aging workforce, losing institutional knowledge, losing intellectual capital, employment turnover, succession planning, losing key leadership in public sector, mentorship, staff development, educational requirements, college requirements for employment, career development, leadership development, changing careers, fear of change, career change related stress, City of University Place, City of Lakewood, Town of Steilacoom and West Pierce Fire & Rescue.

The purpose of the literature review was to conduct research to help answer the following research questions:

- Why do firefighters have a reluctance to accept a staff position on days?
- What training do firefighters think they need in order to be prepared for a staff position on days?
- What training do administrators think firefighters need in order to be prepared for a staff position on days?
- What have been the largest challenges faced by shift personnel after taking a staff position on days?

The next procedure involved development of a questionnaire for distribution to all fire suppression personnel in West Pierce Fire & Rescue. An online questionnaire was distributed via e-mail on November 2, 2014 to 148 employees. The questionnaire was closed on November 23, 2014. A total of 99 questionnaires were returned.

Responses to the questionnaire were compiled into a Word document titled Questionnaire (WPFR Employees), and attached as Appendix A. Data analysis was performed on the responses for the purpose of conducting original research to help answer the following research questions.

- Why do firefighters have a reluctance to accept a staff position on days?
- What training do firefighters think they need in order to be prepared for a staff position on days?
- What have been the largest challenges faced by shift personnel after taking a staff position on days?

A second questionnaire was developed for distribution to senior administrative staff at West Pierce Fire & Rescue. An online questionnaire was distributed via e-mail on November 15, 2014 to seven employees. The questionnaire was closed on December 6, 2014. A total of seven questionnaires were returned.

Responses to the questionnaire were compiled into a Word document titled Questionnaire (WPFR Staff), and attached as Appendix B. Data analysis was performed on the responses for the purpose of conducting original research to help answer the following research questions.

- What training do administrators think firefighters need in order to be prepared for a staff position on days?

A third questionnaire was developed for distribution nationally to fire service first responders. An online questionnaire was distributed via e-mail on November 15, 2014 to the National Society of Executive Fire Officers, the Washington Fire Chiefs Association and the Pierce County Fire Chiefs Association. The total membership of these three organizations, the size of the distribution lists and the total number of e-mails received by the recipients is unknown by the author. The questionnaire was closed on January 2, 2015. A total of 262 questionnaires were returned.

Responses to the questionnaire were compiled into a Word document titled Questionnaire (Nationwide Survey), and attached as Appendix C. Data analysis was performed on the

responses for the purpose of conducting original research to help answer the following research questions.

- What training do firefighters think they need in order to be prepared for a staff position on days?
- What training do administrators think firefighters need in order to be prepared for a staff position on days?
- What have been the largest challenges faced by shift personnel after taking a staff position on days?

A summary of the data analysis performed on appendices A, B and C was compiled into a word document titled Summary Analysis of Questionnaire Responses and attached as Appendix D.

An interview was conducted with Jerry Thorson, Fire Chief for East Pierce Fire & Rescue. East Pierce Fire & Rescue is the third largest fire district in Pierce County. The department has approximately 115 full time uniformed personnel and 30 volunteer personnel serving a population of approximately 88,000. The district encompasses approximately 151 square miles across unincorporated Pierce County and the Cities of Bonney Lake, Edgewood, Milton and Sumner. As a large fire district in Pierce County, East Pierce Fire & Rescue is very similar to West Pierce Fire & Rescue in size and complexity. This interview was conducted on January 7, 2015 at a local restaurant in Puyallup. Interview questions asked by the author can be found in Appendix E, Summary of Interview Questions. The purpose of the interview was to conduct original research to help answer the following research questions:

- Why do firefighters have a reluctance to accept a staff position on days?

- What training do administrators think firefighters need in order to be prepared for a staff position on days?
- What have been the largest challenges faced by shift personnel after taking a staff position on days?

An interview was conducted with Keith Wright, Fire Chief for Central Pierce Fire & Rescue. Central Pierce Fire & Rescue is the largest fire district in Pierce County. The department has approximately 250 full time uniformed personnel serving a population of approximately 200,000. The district encompasses approximately 85 square miles across unincorporated Pierce County and the City of Puyallup. As a large fire district in Pierce County, Central Pierce Fire & Rescue is very similar to West Pierce Fire & Rescue in size and complexity. This interview was conducted on January 9, 2015 in an office at West Pierce Fire & Rescue Station 20. Interview questions asked by the author can be found in Appendix E, Summary of Interview Questions. The purpose of the interview was to conduct original research to help answer the following research questions:

- Why do firefighters have a reluctance to accept a staff position on days?
- What training do administrators think firefighters need in order to be prepared for a staff position on days?
- What have been the largest challenges faced by shift personnel after taking a staff position on days?

There were several limitations encountered during the research. The first limitation was the time allowed for the research to be conducted. As part of the research requirements for the National Fire Academy, the timeframe for research was limited to six months. The author requested and was granted a 60 day extension, making the project timeline eight months.

Another limitation was the nationwide questionnaire. The questionnaire was distributed to the National Society of Executive Fire Officers, the Washington Fire Chiefs Association and the Pierce County Fire Chiefs Association. This restricted responses to departments and first responders with affiliations to at least one of these organizations, limiting the overall size and diversity of the sample population.

Results

Through descriptive research which utilized personal interviews, multiple questionnaires and data analysis the author was able to establish sufficient information to answer four research questions.

Research question one: Why do firefighters have a reluctance to accept a staff position on days?

A department can have extremely dynamic succession plans inclusive of comprehensive training and mentoring programs, however they will still be unsuccessful if they cannot attract individuals to the jobs they need to fill. The type of work firefighters do and the schedules they perform the work in tend to be in extreme contrast to the work schedules and work performed by day staff administrators. Due to this, it can be very difficult for many departments to attract enough qualified personnel to day staff positions. This creates a two-fold problem for fire departments. First, they need to adequately motivate a sufficient number of personnel to consider moving from shift work to day staff. Second, they need to properly train these individuals to be effective and successful in their new role.

Attracting enough qualified candidates to consider a day staff position can be difficult. Firefighters sign up to be firefighters, not administrators. When they look at day staff positions, they see an unmanageable workload, inflexible work schedules and jobs they perceive to be

career dead ends. As a general rule, firefighters see little value in a day job when determining their long term career plans (J. Thorson, personal communication, January 7, 2015).

Within Central Pierce Fire & Rescue, there are enough people available to fill upcoming vacancies in administrative positions. They have all of the strengths and abilities to perform the work, the key is getting them interested in the position and adequately training them to be fully prepared for the challenges of the job. Unfortunately, most of them look at the challenges the organization is facing and don't feel it is worth it (K. Wright, personal communication, January 9, 2015).

Most firefighters see an administrative position as a retirement job to be taken late in their career (J. Thorson, personal communication, January 7, 2015). Most firefighters are not interested in a long term commitment in administration. They are only interested in achieving short term gains right before retirement. Most look at an administrative job as something to do during their last couple of years on the job as a way to build their retirement pension (K. Wright, personal communication, January 9, 2015).

Based on those surveyed in West Pierce Fire & Rescue, there are numerous reasons why firefighters are reluctant to accept a day shift staff position. Overwhelmingly, the most common reason people cited for not wanting a day staff position was the schedule. 80.9% said they preferred working a shift schedule over a day shift schedule. At 38.3%, the second most common reason for not wanting to leave a shift job, was their fear of losing relationships they had built in their current position. The third most common reason, at 36.2% was simply the fact that they did not desire a career path in administration. Overall, of the 99 respondents to the questionnaire, 47 (47.5%) gave at least one reason why they would not consider working in a day staff position.

Research question two: What training do firefighters think they need in order to be prepared for a staff position on days?

In order for a person to transition successfully from shift to days, they first need to determine what training will best prepare them for their new position. In most departments the requisite skills for someone on shift are very different from the skills they will need to be successful in a day staff position. Most firefighters believe the current set of skills that make them successful as a firefighter will carry over and make them successful in a day staff position. For the most part they don't (J. Thorson, personal communication, January 7, 2015).

In a nationwide survey, firefighters and first responders were asked to rank the skills they felt were most important to be successful in a day staff position. The top three skills identified were communications, decision making and critical thinking. The three lowest rated skills were fire suppression experience, union experience and EMS experience. The author did not make any distinction between those working in union states and those working in non-union states. Therefore it is unknown how this influenced the rankings. At least one respondent noted they worked in a non-union state and therefore marked union experience not important at all.

When the same questions were asked of West Pierce Fire & Rescue employees, results were similar, however, fire and EMS experience scored slightly higher. Shift employees who have previously tested for a day staff position scored time management the highest with a score of 91.7 out of 100. Budget and finance, decision making, flexibility and strategic thinking all tied for second with a score of 86.1 out of 100. Fire and EMS experience both scored 80.6 out of 100, making them tied for 10th out of 16 rated skills. The lowest rated skill was union experience, with a score of 61.1 out of 100.

Shift employees who have never tested for a day staff position scored communications and decision making the highest with a score of 89.8 out of 100. Fire and EMS experience scored slightly lower at 78.7 out of 100 and 73.1 out of 100 respectively, making them 11th and 14th out of 16 rated skills. Again, union experience was scored the lowest of all 16 rated skills with a score of 66.7 out of 100.

When the two sample groups are combined, the top five rated skills are time management, decision making, communications, budget and finance and critical thinking, all scoring above 86 points out of a possible 100. Fire and EMS experience both scored in the bottom third of all rated skills with scores of 79.2 out of 100 and 75.0 out of 100 respectively. Union experience remained at the bottom of the list with a score of 65.3 out of 100.

Most shift employees feel they are better prepared for shift work than they actually are. They see the different divisions within the department and believe they understand what work is being performed. However, this is just a peripheral view of what is happening. Once they promote, they quickly find out they actually knew very little about what was involved in managing the division and the department overall (K. Wright, personal communication, January 9, 2015).

When shift employees in West Pierce Fire & Rescue were asked how well prepared they felt they were to take a day staff position, 33% of those who have tested for a day staff position in the past felt they were very prepared. Another 33% felt they were somewhat prepared, while the final third of the group felt they were either only slightly prepared or not prepared at all.

When the same question was asked of employees who have never tested for a day staff position, only 28.6% felt they were very prepared to leave shift and accept a day staff position.

At 42.6%, those who felt they were somewhat prepared to accept a day staff position made up the largest group. A total of 28.6% felt only slightly prepared or not prepared at all.

When West Pierce Fire & Rescue employees who had previously tested for a day staff position were asked what training would help them be better prepared to take a day staff position, 88.9% of the respondents listed budget and finance training. The second most commonly identified training, at 66.7%, was coaching on what to expect. At 22.2%, communications, decision making and time management were all ranked the lowest of 14 different training options.

West Pierce Fire & Rescue employees who have never tested for a day shift position were also polled. Like the other employees, 60.7% of the respondents selected budget and finance training, making it the most commonly identified training needed. Fifty percent of the respondents also identified coaching on what to expect, along with project management training. Ranking the lowest, critical thinking was identified as necessary training by only 7.1% of the respondents.

When the two sample groups are combined, budget and finance training was the most common response, selected by 67.6% of the respondents. Coaching on what to expect was second at 54.1%. Project management rounded out the top three with 51.4%. Scoring the lowest were critical thinking at 16.2% and decision making and time management, each at 13.5%.

Research question three: What training do administrators think firefighters need in order to be prepared for a staff position on days?

Administrators have a unique perspective regarding day staff positions. Having worked a day staff position, they are aware of the challenges faced on a daily basis. From this experience,

they develop a strong understanding of what skills and training are needed to be successful in a day staff position.

In Pierce County, fire district mergers have been very common over the last two decades. Due to this regionalization, departments have become extremely large and complex. Because of the department size, people are less likely to have the right set of skills for an administrative day staff position. Just relying on firefighting and EMS experience isn't enough. Individuals need specific training to help them transition successfully from shift work to a day staff assignment (K. Wright, personal communication, January 9, 2015). In order to be successful, firefighters need additional training regarding what to expect in a day staff position as well as specific skills training related to the position they are seeking (J. Thorson, personal communication, January 7, 2015).

West Pierce Fire & Rescue has three levels of administrative day shift positions; Captain, Battalion Chief and Executive Staff Officer, which includes Assistant Chiefs, the Deputy Chief and the Fire Chief. Executive staff officers within West Pierce Fire & Rescue were surveyed regarding what they felt were the most important training and skills needed for each of these three levels of administration.

When evaluating a Captain's position, executive staff members rated communications as the most important skill needed, rating it with a perfect score of 100. This was followed very closely by decision making, flexibility and adaptability, information technology and writing skills, all receiving 95.8 points out of 100. The three skills ranked the lowest were fire suppression experience (62.5/100), EMS experience (54.2/100) and union experience (50.0/100).

Results for the Battalion Chief showed a slight change in priorities at the top of the scale. While communications still had a perfect score of 100, it was tied for first with time management. Decision making, flexibility and adaptability again scored 95.8 out of 100, but were also tied for second with budget and finance, change management, and personnel management. Information technology and writing skills slipped to third. Fire suppression experience (62.5/100), union experience (58.3/100) and EMS experience (54.2/100) remained at the bottom of the list of priorities.

For positions at the Assistant Chief level and above, the scoring was much more balanced. Budget and finance, change management, communications, decision making, strategic thinking and writing skills all tied for first with 80.0 out of 100 points. Critical thinking, personnel management and project management were a close second gaining 76.7 points out of 100. Again, fire suppression experience (43.3/100), union experience (43.3/100), and EMS experience (40.0/100) were at the bottom of the list of priorities.

One of the big differences between shift work and a day staff position is the diversity of the work. Personnel in day staff positions work on a variety of projects with different divisions internally and different organizations externally. Having a better awareness of the job and understanding the interpersonal dynamics required to be successful working with the various diverse workgroups is critical (J. Thorson, personal communication, January 7, 2015). One of the best ways to learn a job is through effective job shadowing. Job shadowing allows a person to better develop relationships both internally and externally by getting exposure to the various divisions within the department as well as the various governmental agencies the department interacts with at the local and state level (K. Wright, personal communication, January 9, 2015).

In addition to internal training courses and job shadowing programs, there needs to be applicable job related training through college, the National Fire Academy or some other institute of higher learning. Higher education is a vital part of preparing for a day staff assignment (K. Wright, personal communication, January 9, 2015). Higher education, specifically college education is a huge part of preparing for an administrative position. Overall, as an industry, the fire service has to do a better job of requiring more formalized training and education at the college level (J. Thorson, personal communication, January 7, 2015).

Research question four: What have been the largest challenges faced by shift personnel after taking a staff position on days?

Moving from a shift position to a day staff position poses many challenges for most people. In general the three biggest challenges they face are adjusting to the work schedule, overcoming a significant learning curve and adapting to the overall workload (J. Thorson, personal communication, January 7, 2015). This adjustment can be very overwhelming for many people. While on shift there is a lot of flexibility and days off. Readjusting their home life to accommodate a 40-hour workweek cycle can be very challenging for many people. Additionally, shift personnel, for the most part, leave work behind when they leave for home. It can be a difficult adjustment for them to get used to leaving work behind at the end of their shift only to come back to it again the next morning. This makes it much more difficult to disconnect from work in a day staff position compared to a shift position (K. Wright, personal communication, January 9, 2015).

The learning curve is very high for someone newly appointed to a day staff position can be extremely steep. The work is very different from shift work. When compared to shift positions, personnel in a day staff position work with many more divisions and organizations,

they attend a variety of meetings and planning sessions, they are much more involved in budget management and they are often tasked with managing projects that can span weeks, months or even years to complete. Employees often believe they understand what work is involved in a day staff position, but their perspective is from outside of the job, on the periphery. Once they are in the job they realize it is much more complex than they first realized (K. Wright, personal communication, January 9, 2015).

The workload in a day staff position can be extremely demanding. Shift employees have a job that is pretty clearly defined and at the end of their shift they can turn it off and go home. In a day staff position, there is always a significant amount of work left at the end of the day. Because of the significant workload, day staff personnel can find themselves working long hours and/or work from home. Maintaining a good work/life balance is extremely difficult at times (K. Wright, personal communication, January 9, 2015).

West Pierce Fire & Rescue day staff employees were surveyed to determine the biggest challenges they faced when they first transitioned to a day staff position. Respondents rated a lack of support from shift personnel as their biggest challenge with a score of 78.1 out of 100. Pace of the work and time management came in as a close second, each with 75.0 out of 100 points. The least challenging aspects of their jobs were technology (43.8/100) and support from other day staff employees (40.6/100).

The same group of employees were asked to rate the challenges in their job today. Lack of support from shift personnel was again ranked number one with a score of 55.6 out of 100. Time management was again at the top of the list, this time tied for first. The lowest ranked challenges were the hours of duty, technology and uncertainty of job expectations all tied with

38.9 out of 100. Again, lack of support from other day staff employees was ranked the lowest with a score of 36.1 out of 100.

Executive staff officers from West Pierce Fire & Rescue were also asked to rate the challenges they saw in a day staff position. With a score of 75.0 out of 100, they ranked the pace of the work as the most challenging aspect of their jobs. Being flexible and adapting to change was ranked second with a score of 71.4 out of 100. Time management and maintaining effective lines of communications were tied for third with a score of 67.9 out of 100. Uncertainty of job expectations and understanding organizational priorities were ranked the lowest, each with a score of 39.3 out of 100.

In a nationwide survey of emergency responders working in an administrative staff position, time management was identified as the biggest challenge with a score of 74.3 out of 100. Being flexible and adapting to change scored 71.9 out of 100 and pace of the work was ranked number three with a score of 71.7 out of 100. As was the case with West Pierce Fire & Rescue executive staff officers, the nationwide survey respondents ranked understanding organizational priorities (58.4/100) and uncertainty of job expectations (57.9/100) as the least challenging aspects of their jobs.

West Pierce Fire & Rescue is not unique. Fire departments across the country are facing very similar challenges. Senior leadership is retiring at a record pace and replacing them with qualified candidates is becoming an ever increasing challenge.

Discussion

Throughout every industry, America is seeing a steady graying of the workforce. The fire service is no exception. In Washington State, firefighters in the LEOFF II pension program can begin drawing a retirement pension, without penalties, at the age of 53. This means the oldest baby boomers became pension eligible in 1999 and the youngest boomers will be pension eligible in 2017. Public sector agencies will be challenged with minimizing the impacts of losing key staff and years of experience as a significant portion of their workforce moves towards retirement (Smith, 2012). This is a challenge for West Pierce Fire & Rescue with several key day staff employees planning on retiring in the next five years.

For the most part older workers tend to hold senior staff/management positions, and their retirement represents a tremendous loss of institutional memory and knowledge for an organization (Tishman et al., 2012). Historically this has held true in the fire service. Senior officer positions are quite often filled by older workers. Firefighters often remain on the line for a majority of their career and only look to move into a day staff position for the final few years. “This is indicative of the pervasive attitude that 40-hour positions are not for the young within our ranks, but for the older personnel looking to extend their careers” (Legoudes, n.d., p. 32). Most firefighters see a day staff position as something to do just prior to retirement (J. Thorson, personal communication, January 7, 2015). Without an effective succession plan, losing several of these senior leaders in a short time frame can create a critical drain of organizational knowledge and key business practices.

The most successful organizations integrate succession planning and leadership development into their business practices as an ongoing process (Cascio, 2011). Unfortunately, formal succession, mentoring and professional development programs, within the fire service,

are extremely rare (Legoudes, n.d.). This was found to be the case in neighboring departments such as East Pierce Fire & Rescue, where they have programs in place to prepare first level officers, but no formal program or roadmap for day staff positions (J. Thorson, personal communication, January 7, 2015). On the rare occasion a department does have a formal career development plan, it is quite frequently seen as inadequate (Schneider, n.d.). This is the case in Central Pierce Fire & Rescue where they are currently working on creating an officer development program. They currently do some limited job shadowing, but they have no written expectations and are falling short of adequately preparing new officers (K. Wright, personal communication, January 9, 2015). Quite often, organizations spend more time trying to determine the process for filling a vacancy and less time determining how to effectively prepare employees for the position (Sharp, 2009). Succession planning is not made an organizational priority. There is never enough time allocated to effectively develop and implement the programs needed to fully prepare employees (J. Thorson, personal communication, January 7, 2015).

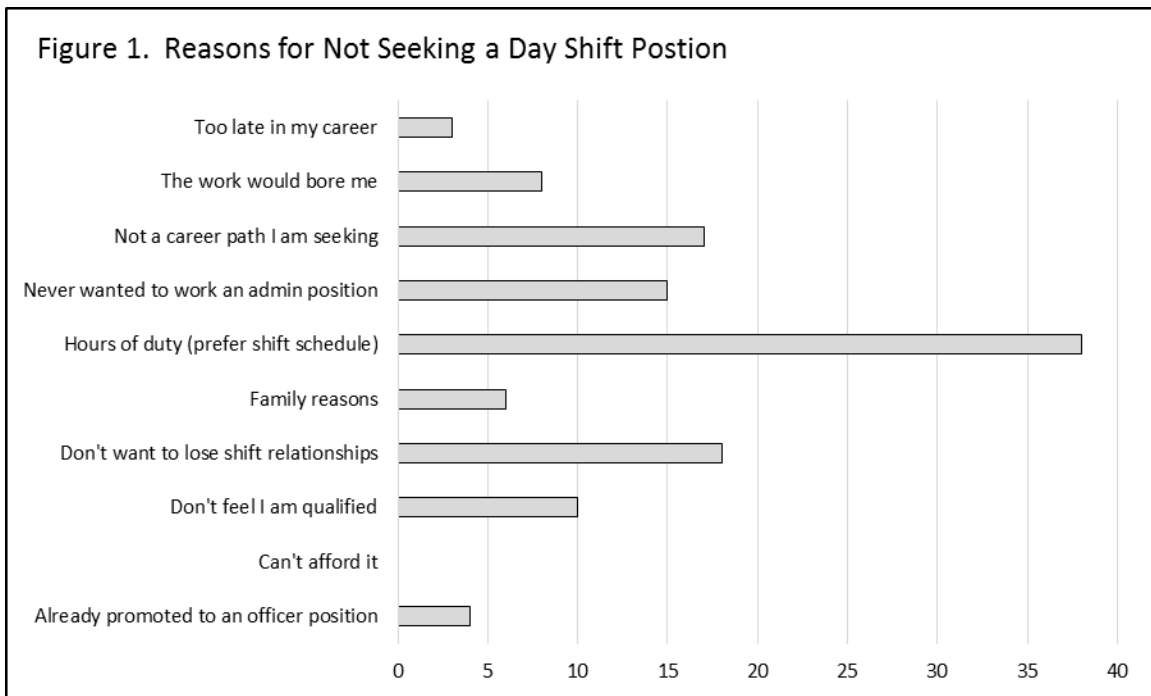
One of the biggest challenges facing succession plans and mentorship programs in the fire service is encouraging enough firefighters to take an interest in administrative positions. Moving from shift work to a day administrative position is a significant change for any firefighter. This should not be underestimated in any succession planning process. The Social Readjustment Rating Scale, designed by Holmes and Rahe in 1967, lists “changing to a different line of work” as number 18 out of 43 major stressful life events, just below the “death of a close friend” (McLeod, 2010). Changing jobs is a very stressful event in a person’s life. There are a number of reasons why people are fearful of changing jobs. Bussin (n.d.), identified fear of the unknown, fear of failure, fear of success, fear of what others might think and fear of making a

bad career change choice as the most common reasons people identified with. When firefighters first join the fire service, they do so because they enjoy the work. They identify with the work, see the workload as manageable, have the ability to walk away from it at the end of their shift and feel comfortable. They find it difficult to identify with a day staff position. They find the workload demanding and never ending. It just isn't the job they signed up for (J. Thorson, personal communication, January 7, 2015). Research shows 47.5% of those surveyed at West Pierce Fire & Rescue provided at least one reason for not considering a day staff position.

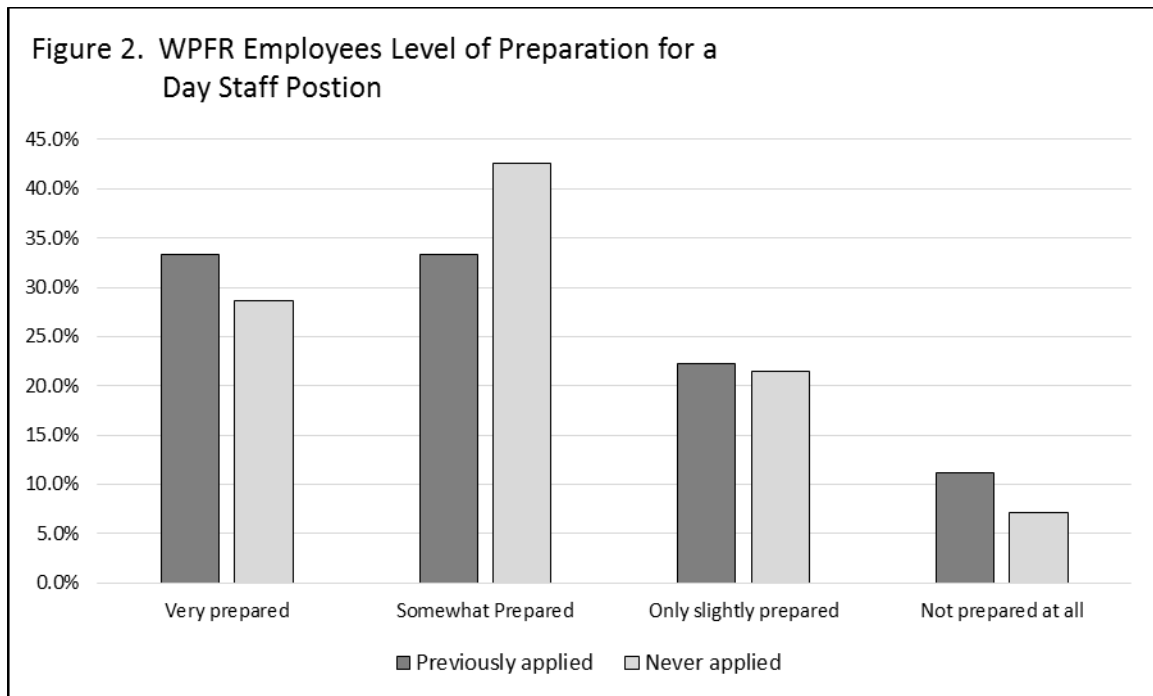
Traditionally, most firefighters work some form of shift work, usually involving 24-hour on-duty shifts followed by one or more days off. In stark contrast to this, day staff positions primarily work traditional 4-5 day work weeks. This is a significant adjustment for most people considering a change from shift work to a day staff position. In contrast to shift work, firefighters see administrative positions as nothing more than long hours often with little to no increase in pay, due to their inability to receive overtime pay achieved on shift (Metcalf, 2013). Most firefighters look at the challenges associated with the work and just don't feel it is worth it (K. Wright, personal communication, January 9, 2015). Employees surveyed at West Pierce Fire & Rescue overwhelmingly (80.9%) cited the work schedule as the most significant reason for not seeking a day staff position.

In addition to the change in work schedule, firefighters are often reluctant to accept an administrative position on days, citing concerns over a lack of comradery, esprit de corps, not being able to respond to emergencies and negative perceptions of administrative work (Davis, n.d.). Many of these reasons were common to firefighters in West Pierce Fire & Rescue. After the change in work schedule, they noted loss of personal relationships (38.3%), seeking a

different career path (36.2%) and no desire for an administrative position (31.9%) as their biggest reasons for not seeking a day staff position.



The combination of a lack of formal succession plans and mentoring programs in the fire service along with a reluctance to leave shift work creates a situation in which the number of qualified candidates is outpaced by the number of available vacancies. More and more, fire departments across the country are experiencing a decline in the number of personnel who are qualified and interested in promoting into a staff assignment (Prziborowski, 2013). K. Wright (personal communication, January 9, 2015), felt this to be the case in Central Pierce Fire & Rescue. While they have enough people with the strengths and abilities to fill upcoming staff vacancies, they are not adequately prepared. When West Pierce Fire & Rescue firefighters were asked to rate how well they felt they were prepared to accept a day staff position, less than one third felt they were very prepared.



If they fail to adequately prepare a sufficient pool of qualified candidates internally, departments are often forced to open up their promotional process to candidates outside of the organization, (Alyn, 2012). In order to avoid going outside of the organization to find qualified candidates, departments need to establish an effective succession and mentorship plan. Effective leadership development programs are multifaceted, focusing on core, essential job skills required of a day staff officer. In order to be successful, employees need to understand what training is required for their success and what they can expect in their new position (Brophy, 2013).

Training priorities identified by K. Wright (personal communication, January 9, 2015), align very closely with this concept. 1) Job shadowing and mentoring to help candidates identify the various roles performed by staff 2) attending applicable job related courses at a college level or through the National Fire Academy 3) provide the candidate with exposure to personnel from other divisions within the department as well as other departments and governmental agencies at a local and state level to help build relationships and an understanding of how all the various stakeholders work together. J. Thorson (personal communication, January 7, 2015), identified

very similar core training priorities for candidates. 1) Provide better job awareness through training and job shadowing 2) focused training on the skills needed for the specific job 3) training and development on interpersonal dynamics to better prepare the employee for their interactions with the various workgroups and stakeholders inside and outside the organization.

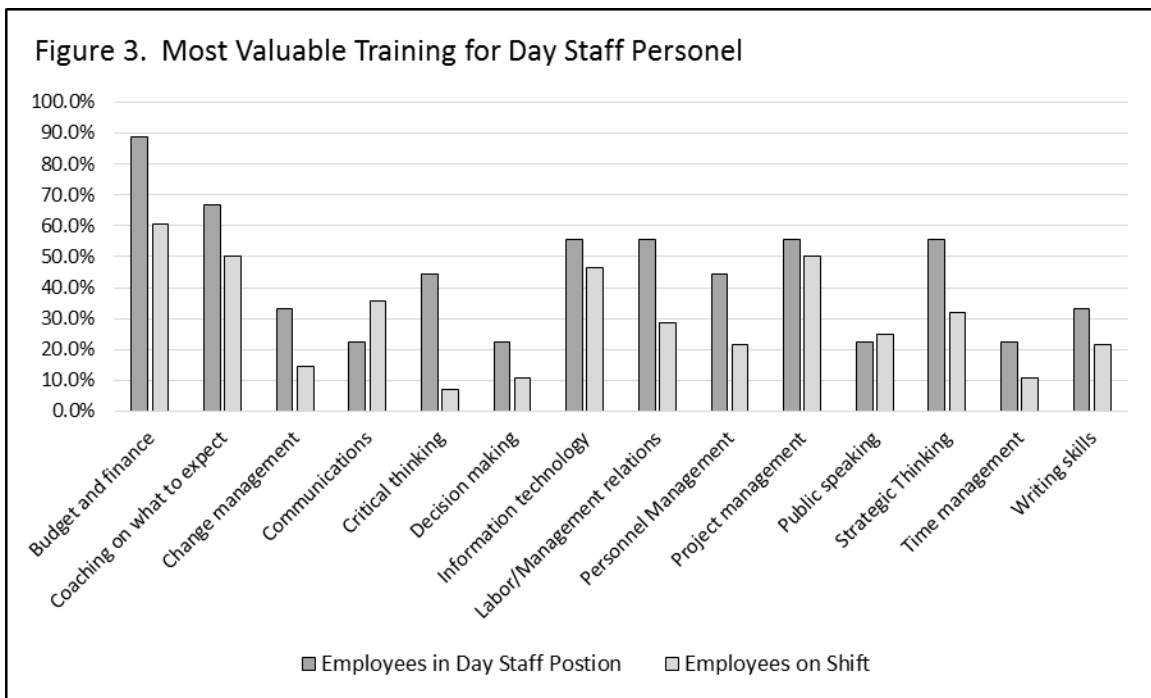
Helping candidates understand the expectations of a day staff position is vital to the success of any succession planning process. This was confirmed by employees surveyed at West Pierce Fire & Rescue. When those working in administrative positions were asked what training would have helped them feel better prepared to accept a day shift administrative position, 75% cited coaching on what to expect. When employees are promoted into a day staff position from shift work, they quickly learn the experience they have as an emergency responder does little to prepare them for a day staff administrative position (Hagen, 2014). In a nationwide survey of firefighters and first responders, fire suppression experience, union experience and EMS experience were ranked as the least valuable skills needed for success in a day staff position. West Pierce Fire & Rescue firefighters rated these three skills slightly higher, but they still fell into the bottom third of all rated skills. Similar to the nationwide survey, senior staff officers in West Pierce Fire & Rescue ranked fire suppression experience, union experience and EMS experience as the least valuable skills for success in a day staff position.

In a nationwide survey of firefighters and first responders, respondents identified communications, decision making and critical thinking as the three most important skills needed for success in a in a day staff position. Results from firefighters in West Pierce Fire & Rescue were very similar, with time management, decision making and communications rated the highest of 16 skills.

Senior staff officers in West Pierce Fire & Rescue were surveyed on the same skills, but the survey looked at three distinctly unique administrative positions at different levels within the organization; Captain, Battalion Chief and senior staff officer, Assistant Chief and above. At the Captain level, they rated communications as the number one skill required for success, while decision making, flexibility and adaptability, information technology and writing skills were all tied for second. At the Battalion Chief level communications and time management were tied for first while decision making flexibility and adaptability tied for second. At the senior staff level, budget and finance, change management, communications, decision making, strategic thinking and writing skills were all tied for first while critical thinking, personnel management, and project management all tied for second. These results show how the skills needed for success evolve and expand at higher levels, reinforcing the need for continuing leadership training and mentorship at all levels of the organization.

Without adequate training and mentorship programs, new fire service leaders tend to have very little background in key business practices such as budgeting, human resources and legal issues (Pianezza, 2010). Newly promoted firefighters have some limited understanding of budget and finance, but overall, they have little understanding of administrative job responsibilities (K. Wright, personal communication, January 9, 2015). With limited financial resources and available training hours, a fire department's succession training has to be focused and built around education that will be the most beneficial to administrative candidates. West Pierce Fire & Rescue employees who have already promoted to a day staff position were surveyed to determine what training would have been the most beneficial to them prior to promoting into their current position. At 88.9%, budget and finance training was identified and the most needed training. The second most common response was coaching on what to expect at

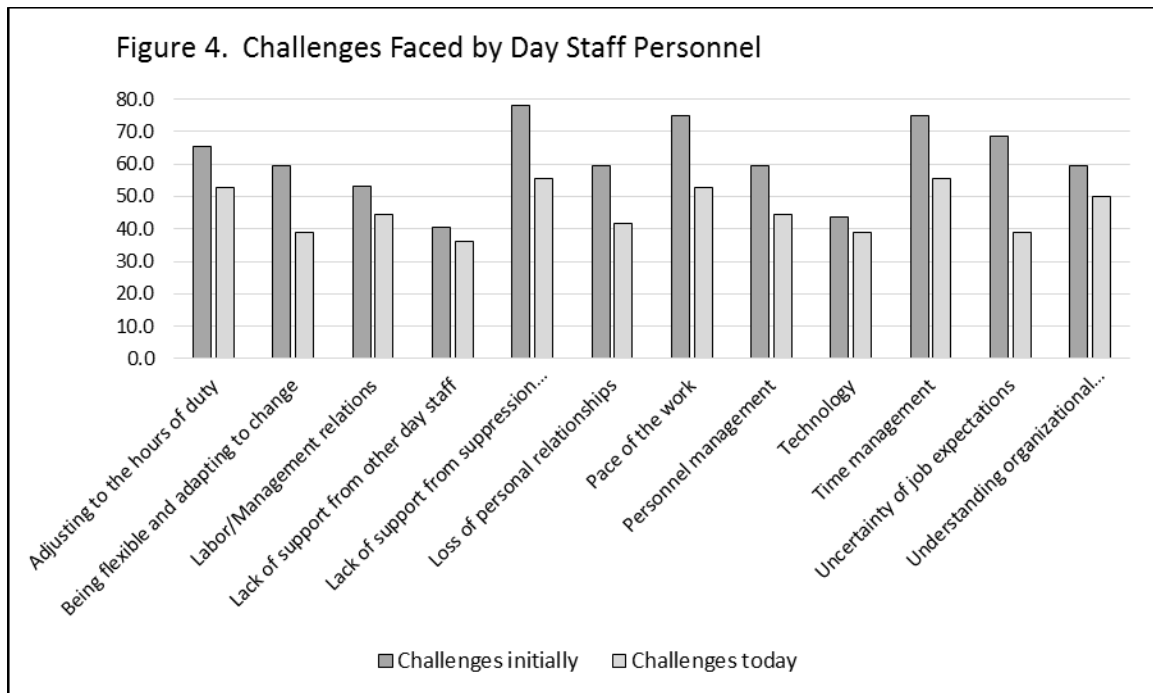
66.7%. West Pierce Fire & Rescue employees who are still on shift, but have an interest in promoting to a day staff position were asked the same question. The results at the top of the list were unchanged. Budget and finance training was first at 60.7% and coaching on what to expect was second at 50.0%.



College level education should also be considered an integral part of any successful training program for candidates seeking an administrative position. It is estimated by 2018, 63% of all job openings in the United States will require some level of college education (Amdur, 2013). As an industry the fire service needs to do a much better job of recognizing the value of formal training and education at the college level (J. Thorson, personal communication, January 7, 2015). Higher education is extremely important for someone seeking an administrative position. It sends the right message about how well prepared an individual is to take on an administrative position within the organization (K. Wright, personal communication, January 9, 2015).

Training programs cannot be successful if they simply provide training to prepare individuals for a new position, but fail to continue developing them once they take on their new role. Continuing mentorship and training needs to be provided to help remove challenges faced by newly promoted employees. The challenges for newly promoted officers is formidable. It can be very difficult to adjust to the new work schedule and the workload is often much higher than they expected. Overall, there is a very steep learning curve (J. Thorson, personal communication, January 7, 2015). Adjusting to the work schedule can be very daunting. Leaving the office with a mountain of unfinished work only to find it still waiting again the next day can quickly become very overwhelming to someone familiar with shift work. They quickly realize the job is much more complex and demanding than they perceived it to be when they were on shift (K. Wright, personal communication, January 9, 2015).

Employees currently working in a day staff position at West Pierce Fire & Rescue were surveyed to rate the biggest challenges they faced when they first took a day staff position. Lack of support from shift personnel was rated the highest with a score of 78.1 out of 100. The pace of the work and time management were identified as a close seconds with a score of 75.0 out of 100. When the same group was asked to rate the biggest challenges in their job today, the responses changed little. Again, they rated lack of support from shift personnel highest, tied with time management, each scoring 55.6 out of 100. They rated the pace of the work and adjusting to the hours of duty second, each with a score of 52.8 out of 100.



When the same questions were posed to senior staff officers at West Pierce Fire & Rescue, similar responses were noted. Pace of the work was rated as the biggest challenge with a score of 75.0 out of 100. Being flexible and adapting to change was second with a score of 71.4 out of 100. Time management and maintaining effective lines of communications were tied for third, each scoring 67.9 out of 100. Responses from a nationwide survey of day staff administrators also showed similar results. Time management was identified as the biggest challenge, scoring 74.3 out of 100. Being flexible and adapting to change was second, with a score of 71.9 out of 100. Pace of the work came in as a close third, scoring 71.7 out of 100. It is clear the initial pace of the work is extremely challenging to a newly promoted employee. However, little changes over time. Regardless of the position, time management continues to be a significant challenge for anyone in a day staff administrative position.

Over the next several years, the fire service is going to be challenged to replace a large number of senior administrators. West Pierce Fire & Rescue is not immune to this trend. Replacing these positions without a loss in effective business practices will require a

comprehensive succession planning process. The first step in this process is to establish an adequate pool of interested candidates. Research shows there are a number of reasons why shift personnel are reluctant to leave the comforts of shift work and take on the demands of a day staff position. Changing career paths is an extremely stressful event. The first thing that needs to happen in order to establish an adequate pool of candidates is to help reduce the level of fear and anxiety shift employees have regarding a day staff position.

Part of alleviating their anxiety comes in the form of an effective training program designed to give them the skills needed to be successful in a day shift position. Research has shown more job specific training is needed to help shift personnel adequately prepare for a day staff position. The technical training and experience they receive as first responders generally brings little value to a day staff position. This lack of job specific training only serves to reinforce their fears that they are not ready to accept a day staff position.

In addition to job specific training, research supports the need for a mentorship and job shadowing program to help shift personnel better understand the role of a day staff employee. Shift personnel usually only see day staff positions from a distance. They rarely understand the complexity of the job, the pace of the work or the diversity of challenges to be expected. Through an effective mentorship program shift personnel would not only better understand what to expect, but also better identify what training they are lacking.

Research has shown most shift employees realize their background in fire and EMS does little to help them succeed in a day staff position. The training they feel they need seems to align fairly closely to the critical training and skills identified by employees currently working on day staff. To be successful, training programs need to be a balance between what shift employees believe they need and those skills identified by current day staff employees. Neither should be

disregarded. Since they are currently doing the work, day staff employees have a very good understanding of what skills are needed to be successful in the position. Shift personnel, on the other hand, recognize where they feel deficient and in what areas they lack confidence. This is something that cannot be ignored. The key is developing a program that strikes a good balance, bridging the two together.

Preparing shift personnel for a day staff position is not the entirety of a comprehensive succession plan. It is critical to continue developing employees after they have accepted a day staff position. The challenges continue to evolve as they promote. Research clearly shows the pace of the work and time management are ongoing challenges for day staff employees at all levels. Additionally, the challenges faced by a day staff employee change over time. At each new level within the organization, a day staff employee needs to develop a broader set of skills to maintain the same level of success. A comprehensive succession plan should include ongoing training to help day staff employees manage ongoing challenges of their job as well as develop skills to prepare for their next job.

Recommendations

Based on literature review and original research, it was determined that in order to effectively manage the loss of key personnel, West Pierce Fire & Rescue should develop a comprehensive succession and mentorship program for shift personnel and existing day staff employees.

The following recommendations are made to West Pierce Fire & Rescue.

- Develop a training program for candidates considering a day staff position. The training program should focus on courses that would provide the most value to

prospective candidates; budget and finance, coaching on what to expect, information technology and project management.

- Develop a job shadowing program for top promotional candidates. The program should focus on helping prospective candidates better understand the scope, complexity and pace of the work as well as help them build relationships with the various stakeholders within and external to the organization.
- Develop an ongoing training program, focusing on time management, for employees who have already promoted to a day staff position.
- Develop follow-up surveys for each new program to evaluate the overall program effectiveness.

Implementation of these recommendations will assist West Pierce Fire & Rescue in preparing an adequate pool of candidates to fill anticipated vacancies as well as improve the overall job performance of personnel assigned to a day staff position.

These recommendations are intended to add value to the succession plans within West Pierce Fire & Rescue. The author recommends future readers contemplating succession planning within their organization conduct new research. Fire departments vary greatly in size, complexity and diversity, therefore research should be tailored to meet the unique needs of the reader's department.

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Appendix A

Questionnaire (WPFR Employees)

Question 1

What type of position do you currently hold?		
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
24-hour shift (field operations)	90.9%	90
Day shift administrative position	9.1%	9
answered question		99
skipped question		0

Question 2

Did you feel fully prepared when you first took a day shift administrative position?		
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Yes	55.6%	5
No	44.4%	4
answered question		9
skipped question		90

Question 3

How would you rate the challenges you faced when you first transitioned to a day shift administrative position?					
Answer Options	Very challenging	Somewhat challenging	Only slightly challenging	Not challenging at all	Response Count
Adjusting to the hours of duty	1	4	2	1	8
Being flexible and adapting to change	2	2	1	3	8
Labor/Management relations	0	3	3	2	8
Lack of support from other day staff	0	1	3	4	8
Lack of support from suppression personnel	2	5	1	0	8
Loss of personal relationships	0	4	3	1	8
Pace of the work	3	2	3	0	8
Personnel management	0	4	3	1	8
Technology	1	1	1	5	8
Time management	2	4	2	0	8
Uncertainty of job expectations	1	4	3	0	8
Understanding organizational priorities	0	5	1	2	8
Please comment on any other significant challenges you encountered.					1
answered question					8
skipped question					91

Please comment on any other significant challenges you encountered.

Not having much exposure to day shift work the scope of work was overwhelming at first, a steep learning curve.

Question 4

What training would have helped you feel better prepared to accept a day shift administrative position? (Please mark all that apply)		
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Budget and finance	37.5%	3
Coaching on what to expect	75.0%	6
Change management	50.0%	4
Communications	0.0%	0
Critical thinking	37.5%	3
Decision making	50.0%	4
Information technology	25.0%	2
Labor/Management relations	25.0%	2
Personnel Management	37.5%	3
Project management	62.5%	5
Public speaking	12.5%	1
Strategic Thinking	50.0%	4
Time management	75.0%	6
Writing skills	25.0%	2
Other (please specify)	0.0%	0
answered question		8
skipped question		91

Question 5

How would you rate the challenges in your job today?					
Answer Options	Very challenging	Somewhat challenging	Only slightly challenging	Not challenging at all	Response Count
Being flexible and adapting to change	0	3	4	2	9
Hours of duty	0	0	5	4	9
Labor/Management relations	0	2	3	4	9
Lack of support from other day staff	0	1	2	6	9
Lack of support from suppression personnel	0	4	3	2	9
Loss of personal relationships	0	0	6	3	9
Pace of the work	1	1	5	2	9
Personnel management	0	2	3	4	9
Technology	0	1	3	5	9
Time management	1	1	6	1	9
Uncertainty of job expectations	0	1	3	5	9
Understanding organizational priorities	0	2	5	2	9
Please comment on any other significant challenges you encounter in your job.					0
answered question					9
skipped question					90

Question 6

How important would you rate the following training/skills for someone seeking a day shift administrative position?					
Answer Options	Very important	Somewhat important	Only slightly important	Not important at all	Response Count
Budget and finance	4	3	1	0	8
Change management	2	6	0	0	8
Communications	6	2	0	0	8
Critical thinking	6	2	0	0	8
Decision making	7	1	0	0	8
EMS experience	2	1	5	0	8
Fire suppression experience	2	1	5	0	8
Flexibility	5	3	0	0	8
Information technology	5	2	0	1	8
Personnel management	3	5	0	0	8
Project management	6	2	0	0	8
Public speaking	3	5	0	0	8
Strategic Thinking	8	0	0	0	8
Time management	6	2	0	0	8
Union experience	0	6	1	1	8
Writing skills	6	2	0	0	8
Please comment on any other skills you feel are relevant.					0
answered question					8
skipped question					91

Question 7

Do you expect to apply for another administrative day shift position, in the future?		
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Yes	87.5%	7
No	12.5%	1
I don't know	0.0%	0
answered question		8
skipped question		91

Question 8

When do you expect to apply again?		
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
In the next 5 years	85.7%	6
5-10 years	14.3%	1
10+ years	0.0%	0
answered question		7
skipped question		92

Question 9

Overall, how well prepared would you say you are to accept your next day shift administrative position?					
Answer Options	Very prepared	Somewhat prepared	Only slightly prepared	Not prepared at all	Response Count
Overall I fell I am	1	6	0	0	7
answered question					7
skipped question					92

Question 10

What training do you feel would help you be better prepared for your next day shift administrative position? (Please mark all that apply)		
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Budget and finance	57.1%	4
Coaching on what to expect	57.1%	4
Change management	57.1%	4
Communications	28.6%	2
Critical thinking	42.9%	3
Decision making	28.6%	2
Information technology	14.3%	1
Labor/Management relations	42.9%	3
Personnel Management	57.1%	4
Project management	42.9%	3
Public speaking	0.0%	0
Strategic Thinking	57.1%	4
Time management	14.3%	1
Writing skills	42.9%	3
Other (please specify)	14.3%	1
answered question		7
skipped question		92

Other (please specify)
More college

Question 11

Have you previously applied for a day shift administrative position?		
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Yes	19.1%	17
No	80.9%	72
answered question		89
skipped question		10

Question 12

Do you expect to apply for the same or another day shift administrative position, in the future?		
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Yes	52.9%	9
No	29.4%	5
I don't know	17.6%	3
answered question		17
skipped question		82

Question 13

When do you expect to apply again?		
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
In the next 5 years	77.8%	7
5-10 years	22.2%	2
10+ years	0.0%	0
answered question		9
skipped question		90

Question 14

Overall, how well prepared would you say you are to accept a day shift administrative position?					
Answer Options	Very prepared	Somewhat prepared	Only slightly prepared	Not prepared at all	Response Count
Overall I fell I am	3	3	2	1	9
answered question					9
skipped question					90

Question 15

What training do you feel would help you be better prepared for a day shift administrative position? (Please mark all that apply)		
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Budget and finance	88.9%	8
Coaching on what to expect	66.7%	6
Change management	33.3%	3
Communications	22.2%	2
Critical thinking	44.4%	4
Decision making	22.2%	2
Information technology	55.6%	5
Labor/Management relations	55.6%	5
Personnel Management	44.4%	4
Project management	55.6%	5
Public speaking	22.2%	2
Strategic Thinking	55.6%	5
Time management	22.2%	2
Writing skills	33.3%	3
Other (please specify)	11.1%	1
answered question		9
skipped question		90

Other (please specify)
How to transition from multiple days in a row of time at home with an active family to only two days a weekend and evenings at home. As it is day staff cannot see their young children in the morning due to their having to leave so early to be at work at 0700. That time is great for shift work but not being able to see your little ones in the a.m. is a bummer.

Question 16

How important would you rate the following training/skills for someone considering a day shift administrative position?					
Answer Options	Very important	Somewhat important	Only slightly important	Not important at all	Response Count
Budget and finance	5	3	1	0	9
Change management	1	7	1	0	9
Communications	3	6	0	0	9
Critical Thinking	4	4	1	0	9
Decision making	5	3	1	0	9
EMS experience	3	5	1	0	9
Fire suppression experience	3	5	1	0	9
Flexibility	5	3	1	0	9
Information technology	4	4	1	0	9
Personnel management	5	2	1	0	8
Project management	4	4	1	0	9
Public speaking	3	2	3	0	8
Strategic Thinking	5	3	1	0	9
Time management	6	3	0	0	9
Union experience	1	3	4	1	9
Writing skills	1	8	0	0	9
Please comment on any other skills you feel are relevant.					0
answered question					9
skipped question					90

Question 17

Have you ever considered applying for a day shift administrative position?		
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Yes	38.9%	28
No	61.1%	44
answered question		72
skipped question		27

Question 18

When do you plan on applying for a day shift administrative position?		
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
In the next 5 years	48.1%	13
5-10 years	37.0%	10
10+ years	14.8%	4
answered question		27
skipped question		72

Question 19

Overall, how well prepared would you say you are to accept a day shift administrative position?					
Answer Options	Very prepared	Somewhat prepared	Only slightly prepared	Not prepared at all	Response Count
Overall I feel I am	8	12	6	2	28
answered question					28
skipped question					71

Question 20

What training do you feel would help you be better prepared for a day shift administrative position? (Please mark all that apply)		
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Budget and finance	60.7%	17
Coaching on what to expect	50.0%	14
Change management	14.3%	4
Communications	35.7%	10
Critical thinking	7.1%	2
Decision making	10.7%	3
Information technology	46.4%	13
Labor/Management relations	28.6%	8
Personnel Management	21.4%	6
Project management	50.0%	14
Public speaking	25.0%	7
Strategic Thinking	32.1%	9
Time management	10.7%	3
Writing skills	21.4%	6
Other (please specify)	17.9%	5
answered question		28
skipped question		71

Other (please specify)
mentorship from someone that is actually qualified/successful in that position
Many of these skills are learned through a formal college education.
All of these items listed above are areas that, as a whole, all shift personnel would benefit from. Even if employees do not intend on moving into a day shift position it would be beneficial to know how and, more importantly, why decisions are being made the way they are. Training in these avenues could come in a formal format, but I think the best application would be more visit by day staffers to the dayroom tables. Clearly one could not teach the ins and outs of these subjects over a cup of coffee, but how the administration thinks in such regards could be conveyed over time. Perhaps both a formal and informal approach could be taken.
Networking in the right circles
None

Question 21

How important would you rate the following training/skills for someone considering a day shift administrative position?					
Answer Options	Very important	Somewhat important	Only slightly important	Not important at all	Response Count
Budget and finance	13	14	0	0	27
Change management	3	20	2	2	27
Communications	20	5	1	0	26
Critical Thinking	16	9	1	1	27
Decision making	19	6	1	1	27
EMS experience	7	12	7	1	27
Fire suppression experience	12	9	4	2	27
Flexibility	13	11	2	1	27
Information technology	8	14	5	0	27
Personnel management	16	10	0	1	27
Project management	12	14	1	0	27
Public speaking	8	14	5	0	27
Strategic Thinking	14	11	0	1	26
Time management	16	10	1	0	27
Union experience	5	11	8	3	27
Writing skills	13	14	0	0	27
Please comment on any other skills you feel are relevant.					2
answered question					27
skipped question					72
Comment 1: The ability to interact with people in a positive manner/not fake					
Comment 2: Military					
Please comment on any other skills you feel are relevant.					
the ability to interact with people in a positive manner/not fake					
Military					

Question 22

Why would you not consider applying for a day shift administrative position? (Please mark all that apply)		
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Already promoted to an officer position	8.5%	4
Can't afford it	0.0%	0
Don't feel I am qualified	21.3%	10
Don't want to lose shift relationships	38.3%	18
Family reasons	12.8%	6
Hours of duty (prefer shift schedule)	80.9%	38
Never wanted to work an administrative position	31.9%	15
Not a career path I am seeking	36.2%	17
The work would bore me	17.0%	8
Too late in my career	6.4%	3
Please add any other reasons that apply	7	7
answered question		47
skipped question		52

Please add any other reasons that apply
I may want to go to a day position but not at this point in my career
If they call medic school a lobotomy, I can't imagine what you would call doing admin work!
Enjoy the action and risks of being on the line.
Like having a physically demanding job.
Plan to try to promote
I'm pretty early in my career and applying for an administrative position hasn't really been a consideration to this point. I'm having so much fun on shift, it's hard to imagine going to days!
Working 24 hour shifts and the schedule has been something that my wife and I became accustomed to early on and my young children have only known this type of schedule for me. It is easier or more comfortable with the known vs. the unknown.
Pulled out of the last test for same reason

Appendix B

Questionnaire (WPFR Staff)

Question 1

How would you rate the challenges in a day shift administrative position?					
Answer Options	Very challenging	Somewhat challenging	Only slightly challenging	Not challenging at all	Response Count
Being flexible and adapting to change	2	3	1	1	7
Hours of duty	0	3	3	1	7
Labor/Management relations	0	2	3	0	5
Maintaining effective lines of communication	1	4	1	1	7
Pace of the work	2	3	2	0	7
Personnel management	0	4	3	0	7
Technology	0	5	1	1	7
Time management	1	4	1	1	7
Uncertainty of job expectations	0	1	2	4	7
Understanding organizational priorities	0	0	4	3	7
Please comment on any other significant challenges you encounter in your job.					0
answered question					7
skipped question					0

Question 2

How important would you rate the following training/skills for someone considering a day shift administrative position at the Captain level?					
Answer Options	Very important	Somewhat important	Only slightly important	Not important at all	Response Count
Budget and finance	0	5	1	0	6
Change management	2	3	1	0	6
Communications	6	0	0	0	6
Critical Thinking	3	3	0	0	6
Decision making	5	1	0	0	6
EMS experience	0	3	1	2	6
Fire suppression experience	0	4	1	1	6
Flexibility and adaptability	5	1	0	0	6
Information technology	5	1	0	0	6
Personnel management	2	3	1	0	6
Project management	3	2	0	0	5
Public speaking	0	4	2	0	6
Strategic Thinking	3	2	1	0	6
Time management	4	2	0	0	6
Union experience	0	2	2	2	6
Writing skills	5	1	0	0	6
Please comment on any other skills you feel are relevant.					0
answered question					6
skipped question					1

Question 3

How important would you rate the following training/skills for someone considering a day shift administrative position at the Battalion Chief level?					
Answer Options	Very important	Somewhat important	Only slightly important	Not important at all	Response Count
Budget and finance	5	1	0	0	6
Change management	5	1	0	0	6
Communications	6	0	0	0	6
Critical Thinking	4	2	0	0	6
Decision making	5	1	0	0	6
EMS experience	0	3	1	2	6
Fire suppression experience	1	3	0	2	6
Flexibility and adaptability	5	1	0	0	6
Information technology	4	2	0	0	6
Personnel management	5	1	0	0	6
Project management	4	2	0	0	6
Public speaking	1	4	1	0	6
Strategic Thinking	4	2	0	0	6
Time management	6	0	0	0	6
Union experience	0	3	2	1	6
Writing skills	4	2	0	0	6
Please comment on any other skills you feel are relevant.					0
answered question					6
skipped question					1

Question 4

How important would you rate the following training/skills for someone considering a day shift administrative position at the Assistant Chief level or above?					
Answer Options	Very important	Somewhat important	Only slightly important	Not important at all	Response Count
Budget and finance	6	0	0	0	6
Change management	6	0	0	0	6
Communications	6	0	0	0	6
Critical Thinking	5	1	0	0	6
Decision making	6	0	0	0	6
EMS experience	0	2	2	2	6
Fire suppression experience	0	3	1	2	6
Flexibility and adaptability	5	0	0	0	5
Information technology	2	4	0	0	6
Personnel management	5	1	0	0	6
Project management	5	1	0	0	6
Public speaking	4	2	0	0	6
Strategic Thinking	6	0	0	0	6
Time management	5	0	1	0	6
Union experience	0	2	3	1	6
Writing skills	6	0	0	0	6
Please comment on any other skills you feel are relevant.					0
answered question					6
skipped question					1

Appendix C

Questionnaire (Nationwide Survey)

Question 1

What size department do you work for?		
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
0-50	34.0%	89
51-100	26.7%	70
101-250	30.9%	81
251-500	6.9%	18
501-1000	0.0%	0
1000+	1.5%	4
<i>answered question</i>		262
<i>skipped question</i>		0

Question 2

What type of department do you work for?		
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Career	45.4%	119
Volunteer	3.8%	10
Combination	50.8%	133
<i>answered question</i>		262
<i>skipped question</i>		0

Question 3

What position do you hold in your department?		
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Firefighter, Engineer or Paramedic on shift	1.1%	3
Company officer on shift	9.2%	24
Chief officer on shift	8.4%	22
Other position on shift	0.4%	1
Administrative officer on day shift	13.4%	35
Assistant Chief, Deputy Chief or Fire Chief	53.6%	140
Other day shift position	13.8%	36
<i>answered question</i>		261
<i>skipped question</i>		1

Question 4

How would you rate the challenges in a day shift administrative position?					
Answer Options	Very challenging	Somewhat challenging	Only slightly challenging	Not challenging at all	Response Count
Being flexible and adapting to change	43	85	46	10	184
Hours of duty	25	57	63	40	185
Labor/Management relations	33	86	47	17	183
Maintaining effective lines of communication	46	74	49	15	184
Pace of the work	43	77	54	12	186
Personnel management	38	79	54	15	186
Technology	16	71	69	30	186
Time management	58	72	44	11	185
Uncertainty of job expectations	23	54	64	44	185
Understanding organizational priorities	24	60	54	46	184
Please comment on any other significant challenges you encounter in your job.					29
<i>answered question</i>					186
<i>skipped question</i>					76

Please comment on any other significant challenges you encounter in your job.
<p>The hardest part of being on days is listening to everyone on the line complain that the day shifters never do anything. They do not see the background and logistical stuff that goes into putting a drill together and on the calendar. They think things should be just appear and the day staff should make it happen on a whim. Being on days and listening to all then negativity can really become an issue if you let it get to you. You have got to be able to let things roll off your back and just continue forward.</p> <p>A person going to days is going to see a whole different side of the organization that they may not have realized even existed. The perspective that he/she will gain will be eye opening.</p>
AV increase is to slow from our recession
<p>Time management is very difficult at first when you come off of shift work. After a breaking in period things begin to work out and you become settled in. The topic areas involving time management should reflect that break-in period. Also, the hours of duty. This can be very "gray" as a chief officer I have found more times than not you need to work well beyond 8-4 if you want to get things done.</p>
Internal and external politics are always a challenge
The higher in position the more interference with elected officials and their staffers
Main problem is all the phone calls and meetings during the day. I usually get more work done in the evening or at night since less distractions.
As with many Department assignments, there is always the challenge of mountains of work with limited personnel resources to complete it.
<p>Dealing with volunteers is at times extremely challenging. You have to sit back and watch the group interact with each other so you can address the ring leaders that are in charge of rumor milling etc. Address the issues as soon as they are identified so they don't grow. Volunteers are a valuable resource but at times are like dealing with teenage cheerleaders</p>
Planning AND having meetings when most of the staff can attend.
Adding additional projects/work on an already full workload.
<p>Our office is one open room that is shared for admin work, volunteers, commissioners and the public. Some times with people coming in to visit it is hard I have to keep names hid on my desk and make sure all my paperwork is locked up. Answering the phones it can be noisy in the back ground. It's hard to stay on task!</p>
Work goes home with you on days and if you take time off no one else does it, not like on shift.
There is never enough time in the day
Every day is an adventure.
<p>It all at some point gets handed to day shift. I don't think there is a project you won't have a hand in. It beats up on you. Your priorities change constantly. People moving to day shift / admin need to know up front they will never make everyone happy and they can't let that get them down or tie them up. The goal is to move forward with what's best for the community we serve and then the organization. It's not for everyone.</p>
<p>This is a great topic. I spent 20 years riding rigs on Operations. Then I went into the Training Division as the Training Captain. This requires a major learning curve and require skills in a lot of areas. On top of the work issues going from 8 days a month to working 4 or 5 days a week has a huge impact on the home life. We have all adjusted our lives to working 24 hour shifts and going to a more traditional work schedule changes everything.</p>
<p>Even though I have a "day shift administrative" position, I am also a responder. I am one of the two paid positions and when the volunteers do not respond, paid staff need to go. This creates a challenge when the calls occur after the day shift.</p>

Please comment on any other significant challenges you encounter in your job.
I had no knowledge of what my administrative job entailed and received little training before taking over.
Like many other departments, we face financial struggles and have reduced administrative staff. Currently I am the only training officer managing over 100 career/volunteer firefighters and EMTs. Very challenging.
resistance of shift personnel to be assigned to days
I am also a firefighter so I do the administrative as well as go on calls. I think other departments should consider that; not only does that help the department but for the position it mixes the tasks up and makes the job more interesting.
Interaction with the public and City administration: Mayor, City Administrator flexing their so called power over things they do not understand.
This question is not easy to answer as it is dependent on the person's skill set coming into the position. One may find project management very challenging where another would not.
"Other duties as assigned..." That pretty much sums it up. Keep going. Do good work. Treat everyone with respect. My Chief understands the work load and requirements and doesn't push harder than I can go.
Managing strategic financial resources; i.e. long term revenues.
The priorities can change almost hourly, since we are an emergency response organization. What was real important at 0700 may be not important at all when the structure fire came in at 1000 hours, and the meeting with the Chief and Chamber of Commerce Director all of a sudden became extremely important when the "real agenda" was leaked.
Hours of duty should normally not be challenging. If you are asked to work a schedule and you know the schedule in advance it is a simple matter of coming to work. If the question is asked, do you find the hours of duty in a 40 hour work week less desirable compared to 24 hour shift work you would likely not get the answer "not challenging at all"
No one is completing the work when I am gone.
Poor direction from above. No mentoring or training for the position. Too much work, not enough day shift people to handle the work load.
Work/Life balance

Question 5

How important would you rate the following training/skills for someone considering a day shift administrative position?					
Answer Options	Very important	Somewhat important	Only slightly important	Not important at all	Response Count
Budget and finance	124	88	16	0	228
Change management	108	97	21	0	226
Communications	195	27	6	0	228
Critical Thinking	174	46	7	1	228
Decision making	181	43	2	1	227
EMS experience	34	111	70	13	228
Fire suppression experience	59	119	41	8	227
Flexibility and adaptability	160	63	5	0	228
Information technology	85	124	18	0	227
Personnel management	140	71	13	0	224
Project management	146	73	9	0	228
Public speaking	88	114	25	1	228
Strategic Thinking	161	63	4	0	228
Time management	168	56	4	0	228
Union experience	39	114	57	16	226
Writing skills	163	60	5	0	228
Please comment on any other skills you feel are relevant.					25
<i>answered question</i>					228
<i>skipped question</i>					34

Please comment on any other skills you feel are relevant.
About two years ago I finished a 4 year assignment as a Captain MSO on a day assignment. I was shocked at how much I had to learn and how much I learned at the same time. Good record keeping, great communication skills and the ability to manage your time/calendar is critical.
We do not have unions so i left that one blank.
The ability to lead
I believe that skill requirements would vary on the job. A training officer job requirements would be very different from a budget analyst.
Dealing with the elected officials/politics
I am an advocate of rotating Chief Officers between day and shift work assignments to broaden the experience of Command Staff.
I have been assigned to three different day positions in the Marshal's Officer, Training and Acting Deputy Chief. All of the above skills are important, however communications skills and personnel management/interactions are most import. I would add a leadership component to the skill set. You need to be a leader at all times, days gives you a greater chance to have a positive or negative impact on the Department.
Please comment on any other skills you feel are relevant.

Flexibility to change at home. Not all wives/husbands love you being home every night after being used to shift work.
Some of these answers would change with the rank job description of the person working on days.
We are not Union so experience would not matter in this case. I am the Admin for the Fire Department but there is times that the Chief and I are the only ones around to run a call. So EMT and Fire knowledge is a must for this office position I think.
Personnel management is dependent on span of control.
Department traditions and culture
All of the skills listed above are situational. If the position is in Finance, managing a budget single handedly, not presenting or requesting funds, public speaking is less important but budget savvy is critical. PIO/PEO is just the opposite.
Union Experience has been very important. To come into the job with knowledge of labor management issues and have the means to talk, communicate and resolve them is most important when transitioning to an office management/division chief position.
We are a small department the respond as a two person crew...hence why it is essential to have Fire/EMS experience. Our daytime firefighter position would also need to be able to create reports, speak at public engagements and handle day to day activities to maximize costs, assets and efficiencies.
I think the list above is very well developed and includes key KSAs required for a day shift position.
I replied "very important" in all of these categories since these are the things I deal with quite often.
It all depends on the day job
I went from 28 years on the trucks to a newly created community affairs officer. My challenge and one of the great parts of the job is the responsibility of crafting what the job is. I have used every skill I have and need to learn a new one every day. Like a rookie firefighter there is no better way to prepare for the job then doing the job. You can't really teach "having an open mind and a desire to embrace new challenges" but they are the most critical skills in changing from shift to days. All the items on the list have merit but they are almost all acquired skills or character traits. I appreciated most a compassionate and motivational supervisor, because what I miss the most is my fellow firefighter who understands what I am doing and encourages excellence in what I do (teammates) Good Luck sir
Our department normally responds as a two person crew...hence the importance of Fire/EMS skills. As a smaller department, our daytime administrator should be able to do all functions job duties in order to maximize cost, abilities and efficiencies.
Recognizing that the work you are doing cannot be based on "your experience when you were on the line". The administrative officer needs to take active feedback from the crews on the line and abandon all thoughts of "this is how I think it should be done..." The admin chief is not on the line anymore- most seem to forget that.
Political savvy- must understand the audience in which you are crafting your message or proposal.
Fire Suppression and EMS experience requirement is relative to the type of Administrative position held.
Legal considerations impacting the fire service
The field experience is important, but if you have good field supervisors, they can free you up to do YOUR job. Being able to speak and write clearly and effectively in an administrative position has more value than "street skills".
We do less fire suppression every year. We are really an EMS agency that occasionally puts out fires.

Appendix D

Summary Analysis of Questionnaire Responses

How would you rate the challenges you faced when you first transitioned to a day shift administrative position? Appendix A, question 3. Answered by WPFR employees who currently hold a day shift administrative position.

Answer Options	Score
Lack of support from suppression personnel	78.1
Pace of the work	75.0
Time management	75.0
Uncertainty of job expectations	68.8
Adjusting to the hours of duty	65.6
Being flexible and adapting to change	59.4
Loss of personal relationships	59.4
Personnel management	59.4
Understanding organizational priorities	59.4
Labor/Management relations	53.1
Technology	43.8
Lack of support from other day staff	40.6
Answers given the following scores. Very challenging = 4 points Somewhat challenging = 3 points Only slightly challenging = 2 points Not challenging at all = 1 point Final scores were adjusted to a 100 point scale.	

How would you rate the challenges in your job today? Appendix A, question 5. Answered by WPFR employees who currently hold a day shift administrative position.

Answer Options	Score
Lack of support from suppression personnel	55.6
Time management	55.6
Being flexible and adapting to change	52.8
Pace of the work	52.8
Understanding organizational priorities	50.0
Labor/Management relations	44.4
Personnel management	44.4
Loss of personal relationships	41.7
Hours of duty	38.9
Technology	38.9
Uncertainty of job expectations	38.9
Lack of support from other day staff	36.1
Answers given the following scores. Very challenging = 4 points Somewhat challenging = 3 points Only slightly challenging = 2 points Not challenging at all = 1 point Final scores were adjusted to a 100 point scale.	

How important would you rate the following training/skills for someone seeking a day shift administrative position? Appendix A, question 6. Answered by WPFR employees who currently hold a day shift administrative position.

Answer Options	Score
Strategic Thinking	100.0
Decision making	96.9
Communications	93.8
Critical thinking	93.8
Project management	93.8
Time management	93.8
Writing skills	93.8
Flexibility	90.6
Budget and finance	84.4
Information technology	84.4
Personnel management	84.4
Public speaking	84.4
Change management	81.3
EMS experience	65.6
Fire suppression experience	65.6
Union experience	65.6
Answers given the following scores. Very important = 4 points Somewhat important = 3 points Only slightly important = 2 points Not important at all = 1 point Final scores were adjusted to a 100 point scale.	

How important would you rate the following training/skills for someone considering a day shift administrative position? Appendix A, question 16. Answered by WPFR employees who have previously applied for a day shift administrative position, but still work on shift.

Answer Options	Score
Time management	91.7
Budget and finance	86.1
Decision making	86.1
Flexibility	86.1
Strategic Thinking	86.1
Communications	83.3
Critical Thinking	83.3
Information technology	83.3
Project management	83.3
EMS experience	80.6
Fire suppression experience	80.6
Personnel management	77.8
Writing skills	77.8
Change management	75.0
Public speaking	66.7
Union experience	61.1
Answers given the following scores. Very important = 4 points Somewhat important = 3 points Only slightly important = 2 points Not important at all = 1 point Final scores were adjusted to a 100 point scale.	

How important would you rate the following training/skills for someone considering a day shift administrative position? Appendix A, question 21. Answered by WPFR employees who have never previously applied for a day shift administrative position and currently work on shift.

Answer Options	Score
Communications	89.8
Decision making	89.8
Time management	88.9
Personnel management	88.0
Budget and finance	87.0
Critical Thinking	87.0
Writing skills	87.0
Project management	85.2
Flexibility	83.3
Strategic Thinking	83.3
Fire suppression experience	78.7
Information technology	77.8
Public speaking	77.8
EMS experience	73.1
Change management	72.2
Union experience	66.7
Answers given the following scores. Very important = 4 points Somewhat important = 3 points Only slightly important = 2 points Not important at all = 1 point Final scores were adjusted to a 100 point scale.	

What training do you feel would help you be better prepared for a day shift administrative position? Cumulative total of questions 15 and 20, Appendix A. 25% of the respondents have previously applied for a day shift administrative position, but still work on shift. 75% of the respondents have never previously applied for a day shift administrative position and currently work on shift.

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Budget and finance	67.6%	25
Coaching on what to expect	54.1%	20
Project management	51.4%	19
Information technology	48.6%	18
Strategic Thinking	37.8%	14
Labor/Management relations	35.1%	13
Communications	32.4%	12
Personnel Management	27.0%	10
Public speaking	24.3%	9
Writing skills	24.3%	9
Change management	18.9%	7
Critical thinking	16.2%	6
Decision making	13.5%	5
Time management	13.5%	5

How important would you rate the following training/skills for someone considering a day shift administrative position? Cumulative total of questions 16 and 21, Appendix A. 25% of the respondents have previously applied for a day shift administrative position, but still work on shift. 75% of the respondents have never previously applied for a day shift administrative position and currently work on shift.

Answer Options	Score
Time management	89.6
Decision making	88.9
Communications	88.2
Budget and finance	86.8
Critical Thinking	86.1
Personnel management	85.4
Project management	84.7
Writing skills	84.7
Flexibility	84.0
Strategic Thinking	84.0
Fire suppression experience	79.2
Information technology	79.2
EMS experience	75.0
Public speaking	75.0
Change management	72.9
Union experience	65.3
Answers given the following scores. Very important = 4 points Somewhat important = 3 points Only slightly important = 2 points Not important at all = 1 point Final scores were adjusted to a 100 point scale.	

How would you rate the challenges in a day shift administrative position? Appendix, question 1

B. Answered by WPFR executive staff members.

Answer Options	Score
Pace of the work	75.0
Being flexible and adapting to change	71.4
Maintaining effective lines of communication	67.9
Time management	67.9
Personnel management	64.3
Technology	64.3
Hours of duty	57.1
Labor/Management relations	42.9
Uncertainty of job expectations	39.3
Understanding organizational priorities	39.3
Answers given the following scores. Very challenging = 4 points Somewhat challenging = 3 points Only slightly challenging = 2 points Not challenging at all = 1 point Final scores were adjusted to a 100 point scale.	

How important would you rate the following training/skills for someone considering a day shift administrative position at the Captain level? Appendix B, question 2. Answered by WPFR executive staff members.

Answer Options	Score
Communications	100.0
Decision making	95.8
Flexibility and adaptability	95.8
Information technology	95.8
Writing skills	95.8
Time management	91.7
Critical Thinking	87.5
Strategic Thinking	83.3
Change management	79.2
Personnel management	79.2
Project management	75.0
Budget and finance	70.8
Public speaking	66.7
Fire suppression experience	62.5
EMS experience	54.2
Union experience	50.0
Answers given the following scores. Very important = 4 points Somewhat important = 3 points Only slightly important = 2 points Not important at all = 1 point Final scores were adjusted to a 100 point scale.	

How important would you rate the following training/skills for someone considering a day shift administrative position at the Battalion Chief level? Appendix B, question 3. Answered by WPFR executive staff members.

Answer Options	Score
Communications	100.0
Time management	100.0
Budget and finance	95.8
Change management	95.8
Decision making	95.8
Flexibility and adaptability	95.8
Personnel management	95.8
Critical Thinking	91.7
Information technology	91.7
Project management	91.7
Strategic Thinking	91.7
Writing skills	91.7
Public speaking	75.0
Fire suppression experience	62.5
Union experience	58.3
EMS experience	54.2
Answers given the following scores. Very important = 4 points Somewhat important = 3 points Only slightly important = 2 points Not important at all = 1 point Final scores were adjusted to a 100 point scale.	

How important would you rate the following training/skills for someone considering a day shift administrative position at the Assistant Chief level or above? Appendix B, question 4.

Answered by WPFR executive staff members.

Answer Options	Score
Budget and finance	80.0
Change management	80.0
Communications	80.0
Decision making	80.0
Strategic Thinking	80.0
Writing skills	80.0
Critical Thinking	76.7
Personnel management	76.7
Project management	76.7
Public speaking	73.3
Time management	73.3
Flexibility and adaptability	66.7
Information technology	66.7
Fire suppression experience	43.3
Union experience	43.3
EMS experience	40.0
Answers given the following scores. Very important = 4 points Somewhat important = 3 points Only slightly important = 2 points Not important at all = 1 point Final scores were adjusted to a 100 point scale.	

How would you rate the challenges in a day shift administrative position? Appendix C, question

4. Nationwide survey, answered by personnel already working in a day staff administrative position.

Answer Options	Score
Time management	74.3
Being flexible and adapting to change	71.9
Pace of the work	71.1
Maintaining effective lines of communication	70.5
Personnel management	69.6
Labor/Management relations	68.1
Technology	60.5
Hours of duty	59.4
Understanding organizational priorities	58.4
Uncertainty of job expectations	57.9
Answers given the following scores. Very challenging = 4 points Somewhat challenging = 3 points Only slightly challenging = 2 points Not challenging at all = 1 point Final scores were adjusted to a 100 point scale.	

How important would you rate the following training/skills for someone considering a day shift administrative position? Appendix C, question 5. Nationwide survey, answered by personnel already working in a day staff administrative position and first responders working a shift assignment.

Answer Options	Score
Communications	95.7
Decision making	94.1
Critical Thinking	93.1
Time management	93.0
Writing skills	92.3
Strategic Thinking	92.2
Flexibility and adaptability	92.0
Project management	90.0
Personnel management	87.6
Budget and finance	86.8
Change management	83.9
Information technology	82.0
Public speaking	81.7
Fire suppression experience	74.9
Union experience	68.9
EMS experience	68.2
Answers given the following scores. Very important = 4 points Somewhat important = 3 points Only slightly important = 2 points Not important at all = 1 point Final scores were adjusted to a 100 point scale.	

Appendix E

Summary of Interview Questions

Jerry Thorson

Fire Chief for East Pierce Fire & Rescue

Interview conducted on January 7, 2015

Interview Questions

1. Do you feel you have enough shift personnel adequately prepared to fill all of your needed day shift positions over the next five years?
2. Do you feel your department has an adequate mentorship and training program to effectively prepare shift personnel for day assignments? If not, why not?
3. Is there a reluctance by shift personnel to apply for a day staff position in your department? If so, what do you believe is the cause of this?
4. Do you think the shift personnel in your department recognize what training they need to be fully prepared for a day staff position?
5. What do you see as the biggest challenges faced by newly promoted shift personnel when they transition to days?
6. If you had the funding and available resources, what would you establish as the top three training priorities for shift personnel seeking a day staff position?
7. How important do you think higher education is in relation to preparing shift personnel for a day staff position?
8. What do you see as the most challenging aspects of day staff position in your department?
9. What do you see as the biggest challenges facing future administrative staff?

Keith Wright

Fire Chief for Central Pierce Fire & Rescue

Interview conducted on January 9, 2015

Interview Questions

1. Do you feel you have enough shift personnel adequately prepared to fill all of your needed day shift positions over the next five years?
2. Do you feel your department has an adequate mentorship and training program to effectively prepare shift personnel for day assignments? If not, why not?
3. Is there a reluctance by shift personnel to apply for a day staff position in your department? If so, what do you believe is the cause of this?
4. Do you think the shift personnel in your department recognize what training they need to be fully prepared for a day staff position?
5. What do you see as the biggest challenges faced by newly promoted shift personnel when they transition to days?
6. If you had the funding and available resources, what would you establish as the top three training priorities for shift personnel seeking a day staff position?
7. How important do you think higher education is in relation to preparing shift personnel for a day staff position?
8. What do you see as the most challenging aspects of day staff position in your department?
9. What do you see as the biggest challenges facing future administrative staff?