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DEFINING THE ORGANIZATIONAL CULTURE OF THE FAIRBORN FIRE DEPARTMENT

EXECUTIVE LEADERSHIP

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Dr. Robert Scherer, Chair of the Department of Management, Wright State University; Firefighter/Paramedic Donald Sherlock; and Mary R. Blake.

ABSTRACT

In an effort to begin a teambuilding and organizational development program, organizational culture, an important but often overlooked component of the Fairborn Fire Department, was identified for study. This research project will provide insight into the organizational culture of the Fairborn Fire Department, and provide methodology for organizational development and change. The problem that this research project will address is that attempts at organizational development and teambuilding have not been successful due to a failure to thoroughly understand the needs, beliefs, values, and perceptions of the members of the fire department. The overall purpose is to identify the organizational culture, define the strengths and weaknesses, and provide recommendations for methodology of organizational change, teambuilding, and resolution of cultural conflict. The research required the use of both historical and descriptive methodologies. The research questions were

1. What are the strengths and weaknesses within the Fairborn Fire Department that have the greatest impact on its present organizational culture?
2. What are the elements of the organizational culture within the Fairborn Fire Department?
3. How can the organizational culture be defined?

The procedures required the survey of the general population of the fire department. They were then broken down into three subpopulations, for a total of four survey groups. Along with the review of written material on the subject, survey instruments were distributed. The aggregate data were then compiled, numeric analysis performed, and further evaluation and interpretation made by Dr. Scherer and the author. The findings provided a consensus on five areas which could be classified as an organizational weakness. Several other areas were identified where a weakness occurred in three of the four population groups. An organizational culture was defined and the elements of the culture stated. The indications of the findings allowed for the recommendation of five main areas of concern for immediate action. It also established a baseline from which future measurements can be made, maintaining of strengths and improvement of teambuilding efforts.

INTRODUCTION

As the autocratic design of fire service management continues to decline, efficient and effective fire service leaders are beginning to realize that organizational culture plays a significant part in their desires for organizational change, teambuilding efforts and the overall search for excellence.

All organizations possess some form and shape of culture, and in some cases, there may be more than one culture in existence. Organizational culture is sometimes difficult to define, and even more difficult to assess, measure and, if needed, to change.

The problem that this research paper will address is that present attempts at teambuilding and overall organizational improvements within the management of the Fairborn Fire Department have not been successful, due possibly to a failure to understand the needs, beliefs, values, and perceptions of the fire department members and a determination of the organization's climate. Therefore, the Fairborn Fire Department has relied on history, and the informal, unspoken, perceived culture that has been passed on by the veteran fire department members.

The overall purpose of this research project is to identify the current organizational culture, define its strengths and weaknesses, and make the necessary interpretations to suggest recommendations for the necessary methodology for organizational change, teambuilding, and resolution of cultural conflicts.

There are two research methods chosen to determine the organizational culture. An **historical methodology** was chosen to determine the past practices of problem-solving, teambuilding, and overall concern for the values and attitudes of the personnel. The **descriptive methodology** will allow a determination of the present status of the organization's culture through a survey of the fire department members. The purpose of these two research methods is to determine the answers to the following questions:

1. What are the strengths and weaknesses within the Fairborn Fire Department that have the greatest impact on its present organizational culture?
2. What are the elements of the organizational culture within the Fairborn Fire Department?
3. How can the organizational culture be defined?

BACKGROUND AND SIGNIFICANCE

The Fairborn Fire Department is a fully paid department consisting of 42 uniformed members on 3 platoons. Each platoon consists of 1 battalion chief, 2 lieutenants, and 11 firefighters in 2 firehouses. The members staff three engine companies, one truck company, and three advanced life support (paramedic) units. The platoon personnel provide fire and EMS services for both the City of Fairborn, with a population of approximately 35,000, and Bath Township, with a population of approximately 10,000. The city and township are basically residential neighborhoods with light industrial and commercial zones. The most significant concern is probably the campus of Wright State University which employs approximately 1,956 people and has more than 17,000 students.

The administrative staff consists of a fire chief, a deputy chief, EMS chief, one fire marshal, and one civilian secretary. The platoon members work the typical 24-/48-hour shift and the administrative personnel work a 40-hour week consisting of 8 hours per day from Monday to Friday. The administrative staff works out of two locations. The fire chief, deputy chief, and secretary have offices at the headquarters station, fire station Number 1. The fire marshal and EMS chief have offices in a former fire station, fire station Number 2. This is important from the standpoint that it adds to the problem of coordination and communication between administrative and platoon personnel. This arrangement also separates the fire marshal and EMS chief from daily contact with the platoon personnel.

The history of the fire department's growth began in 1884 when the village of Fairfield organized the all-volunteer Fairfield Hook, Ladder, and Bucket Squad. In 1948, the Fairfield Fire Company, Inc., took over the fire protection duties of both the communities of Fairfield and Osborne. When the villages merged in 1950, the fire company changed its name to the Bath Township Fire Company, Inc. The City of Fairborn, as it became named, hired its first full-time department employee, Fire Chief M.L. Warner. On January 1, 1954, and again on January 1, 1955, the city hired two additional men to bring the total employment to four "fire department custodians" and the fire chief. On July 1, 1957, three additional men were hired and the job classification was changed to "firefighter." On April 4, 1956, Local 1235 of the International Association of Fire Fighters was organized. The fire department saw continued growth through the years with the most significant change coming on July 1, 1975, when 14 new firefighter positions were authorized. This had a significant effect on the fire department's culture when the platoons changed from 9 men per platoon to 13. This change also brought the closing of fire station Number 2 and the opening of fire station Numbers 3 and 4. The thirteen platoon members of the department were separated from their co-workers in order to assimilate the new "probies," and to provide guidance for their development as firefighters. Nearly one-third of the firefighting force now had little or no firefighting experience.

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The passage of an Emergency Medical Services Levy on the 8th of November 1977, changed the method in which emergency medical care was provided to the citizens. The fire department hired a Paramedic Supervisor, purchased three advanced life support medic units with telemetry, cardiac monitors with defibrillator, medications, and other advanced life support equipment. Obtaining paramedic certification is now a requirement for any new member hired by the fire department. This brought about a change in the focus of the fire department from one of firefighting to more emphasis on the emergency medical services, a difficult change for many of the older firefighters to accept.

In other changes, the fire department has taken on the responsibilities of fast-water rescue, high-angle rope rescue and rappelling, haz-mat control, and trench rescue.

Three additional personnel were authorized in 1990, bringing the total platoon strength to the present level of 14 per shift. During the time period from 1975 when the fire department received a significant increase in personnel, and 1994, the department has seen an increase of response activity of more than 164 percent. This has placed a significant workload on the available personnel.

The perception of the culture has always been one of providing a high level of service with a minimum of resources.

Since the formation of the fire department in 1884, there have been only five paid fire chiefs. With the promotion of Robert Sponseller to fire chief in 1992 the fire department began a new era of leadership. This change has included the promotion of the training officer to Deputy Chief, and elimination of the training captain position, and the promotion of the EMS supervisor to EMS chief, and the Fire Inspector to Fire Marshal. This current administrative change has created a sense of strain in the organization's culture. Add to this the other internal and external forces, such as increased service demands, additional roles and responsibilities placed on the personnel, demands for higher levels of training and changing demographics within the service area, and common questions come into play: In what direction is the organization headed? Who is going to lead us in that direction? and What is the current organizational culture and does it exist as perceived?

Throughout this history of the Fairborn Fire Department, this author has worked with three or four paid fire chiefs. I have witnessed an organization change from one charging forward under good leadership with a real sense of direction, under the second paid fire chief, to one lost in a pool of incompetence and poor leadership by the third and fourth fire chiefs. The appointment of the department's fifth fire chief, Chief Robert Sponseller, has brought with it a

person who desires to correct some of these past problems and to make changes. After several initial attempts at teambuilding and problem resolution, it became apparent that we did not fully understand the scope or depth of the problems, and that we were only trying to resolve the symptoms of many deeply entrenched, longstanding problems which have developed over many years of inadequate leadership.

While attending the Executive Leadership course, I became aware of the need for understanding the culture of an organization in order to know how to implement change. In his book on organizational development, (Burke, 1987) stated that the role and responsibility of leaders and managers in preparing for and facilitating organizational change should be directed toward identifying the root causes of organizational problems and developing and implementing appropriate interventions. With this knowledge at hand, I approached Chief Sponseller with the idea of completing an in-depth analysis of the fire department culture and providing him with the opportunity to gain the insight about where the organization is today. This would be achieved by examining the organizational culture by:

1. Formally identifying the elements of organizational culture.
2. Formally identifying the strong elements of the organization.
3. Formally identifying the weak elements of the organization.

For organizational development to be truly effective it requires the involvement of all the personnel within the organization. The process chosen will allow the organization to provide a basis upon which goals and objectives can be established, by which the weaknesses can be addressed, the strengths enhanced, and the problems, not the symptoms, resolved. It is understood that this project is only the beginning of a long-term commitment. True organizational development to change problems which developed over years cannot, and will not, occur overnight.

By understanding the root cause of the problems, it is hoped that the leaders and managers of this organization can enhance the quality of this organization, and the services it provides, through better utilization of technical, as well as human, resources.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The review of literature to support this project provided for some interesting theories and philosophies in regards to the concept of organizational culture. The intent of the review of the literature was to gain as much knowledge and insight as possible to assist in my own understanding of the concept of organizational culture. This is necessary in order to determine the methodology for developing a working definition of organizational culture and interpreting the aggregate data and the results of the surveys.

The appropriate place to begin is with the student manual for the Executive Leadership course at the National Fire Academy, as this is where the interest for conducting this particular research project was formulated. The chapter, "Assessing Organizational Culture" (NFA, 1992), provides the first information required for developing a working definition of organizational culture for use in this project. The working definition is built on the idea that the two principal types of assumptions that form any culture are shared beliefs and shared values. The content of the culture is ultimately derived from two principal sources; the first being the assumptions that leaders, managers, and employees bring with them to the organization, and the second being from the actual experience from the people within the organization as they adapt to the internal and external environments. The ability to define and label culture is difficult and requires the use of evidence, both historical and current, to infer what the culture is.

The author then examined several textbooks relating to the study and interpretation of organizational culture. In the book, *Corporate Culture - Diagnosis and Change*, by Desmond Graves (1986), I found several procedures for auditing and changing the culture of organizations. This book relays the research methodology and learning of the author in his quest to determine corporate culture diagnosis and act as a change agent. Although it is, by today's standards, somewhat dated in its material, it provided some ideas about the initial undertaking of determining and changing organizational culture. The book provides an introduction to the idea of corporate culture and the question as to whether it really exists. It provides its own literature summary in an effort to obtain a working definition of the concept of corporate culture and to try and distinguish between the concepts of corporate culture and climate. The author then compares corporate cultures and the methodology of reinforcing their cultures through training. There are four organizations studied and some inferences drawn as to differences in behavior, attitudes, and values in the training programs. The book then proceeds to give advice about the methodology to be used in changing the organizational culture. This is based on firsthand experience of organizations undertaking this task. The book provided insight about why the study of

organizational culture began, why it is important, and how to implement change. It provided the needed foundation to better understand corporate culture.

In 1990, Benjamin Schneider edited *Organizational Climate and Culture*. This book takes a look at three major topics in organizational climate and culture: the conceptual issues, the methodological issues and the issues of application. The conceptual issues examine the historical overview of climate and culture research. The book then moves into a discussion on the contemporary thinking about how climate and culture are learned, interpreted, and caused. The discussion takes a look at a detailed conceptual analysis of the psychology of the meaning of organization. It then moves into the ways by which newcomers to the organization are affected and become acculturated by the influence of the organization's culture and climate.

The methodological issues deal with the collection and analysis of organizational climate and culture data. The concern of this section is shown to be in choosing the most appropriate method of data collection. The book gives a review of the strengths and weaknesses of both qualitative and quantitative survey research approaches to data collection. Schneider (1990) then discusses the legitimization of the use of data collected.

The third issue examined is the application of the climate and culture constructs. The author then provides information on the understanding of the behavior in and of organizations. There is an examination of behavioral approaches to creating and maintaining climate and culture, and the usefulness of the climate construct for the diagnosis and change of organizations. Although Schneider (1990) concludes that no single accepted definition of culture exists, culture as something an organization **has** is defined by Schein (1985) as learned responses to the group's problems of survival and internal integration. These responses are subconscious, taken for granted, and shared by members of the social unit. "Norms, values, rituals, and climate are all manifestations of culture. Culture itself is an interpretive scheme or way of perceiving, thinking, and feeling in relation to the group's problems" (Schein, 1985).

In Joanne Martin's *Cultures in Organizations: three perspectives* (1992), she provides an insight into the consolidation of the diverse array of theoretical and empirical studies into an analytic framework that clarifies and challenges the assumptions which have guided the studies of cultures in organizations. The book provides a look at the theoretical aspects of culture in contrast to the actual findings. There are numerous references to different empirical studies which can be utilized to develop aggregate data about an organization's culture.

Charles Hampden-Turner provides a definition in his book, *Creating Corporate Culture: From Discord to Harmony* (1992), which provides insight to

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the overall idea and concern of culture, and assists in the building of a working definition for this project.

Culture comes from within people and is put together by them to reward the capacities that they have in common. Culture gives continuity and identity to the group. It balances contrasting contributions and operates as a self-steering system that learns from feedbacks. It works as a pattern of information and can greatly facilitate the exchange of understanding. The values within a culture are more or less harmonious (Hampden-Turner, 1992).

The final text reviewed was a book that incorporates seven years of work in this field by Harrison M. Trice and Janice M. Beyer, *The Cultures of Work Organizations* (1993). The purpose of the book was to identify past, and largely ignored, findings and apply them with today's, to provide solutions to problems with organizational culture. The author begins to integrate the cultural approach to studying organizations with the mainstream theories and ideas in the contemporary study and analysis of organizations today. The most important information is contained in Chapter 7, "Leadership and Organizational Cultures." This chapter provides definitions for different types of leadership and how leadership can effect cultural change. The emphasis is placed on the values and beliefs the leader brings into the job.

In an effort to see what other fire service leaders have examined about organizational culture within the fire service, this author reviewed numerous Executive Fire Officer applied research projects.

Chief Brian Duggan of the Northborough, Massachusetts, Fire Department, researched organizational culture and its effects on and importance to a combination fire service organization. Chief Duggan found that fire service leaders must recognize the importance of organizational culture when desiring to make changes. The leaders must refrain from making rapid and radical changes which may cause cultural shock (Duggan, 1993).

Lee Daugherty of the Brevard County, Florida, Fire Rescue, took a similar approach in his research project by first studying his department's history and its impact on organizational culture. He found that historical events led to the evolution of the process culture which now personifies his organization.

Mark A. Gaillard of the Goodyear Fire Department, Arizona, differed with the other researchers in that he did not believe culture was identified or attributed to the organizational history. He did concur with the ideas found that leadership is mandated to recognize, comprehend, and then utilize the organizational culture to move, direct, and change the organization.

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Gary R. Littlefield of the South Portland Fire Department, Maine, provided the most important document in the sense that not only did he analyze the culture of his department, but he provided a document for others to follow in their research projects. He took the approach of analyzing the history of the department, along with conducting a survey to quantitatively examine today's attitudes, values and influences. He also developed his own comprehensive survey instruments.

The final document, *Fire Chief's Survival Guide*, is a product of a project completed for the fire services in California. The paper was published by Mathis and Associates in 1989. In Chapter Three, "Organizational Culture," the authors have provided a definition of organizational culture which this author will adopt for use in this project. It is a definition put together by Edgar Schein, a management professor at MIT.

Organizational culture is a pattern of basic assumptions--invented, discovered or developed by a given group as it learns to cope with its problems of external adaptation and internal integration--that has worked well enough to be considered valid and, therefore, to be taught to new members as the correct way to perceive, think and feel in relation to those problems (Schein, 1985).

PROCEDURES

The review of literature pointed out the fact that organizational culture cannot be easily measured, observed, and defined. Therefore, it was this author's decision to utilize both historical and descriptive methodologies of research in order to obtain both qualitative and quantitative aggregate data. Historical research involves the studying, understanding, and explaining of past events in order to arrive at conclusions about causes, effects, and trends of past events. This can then help the researcher in understanding and explaining present events and to also anticipate future events. Two of the principal types of assumptions which form a culture are shared beliefs and shared values. What has to be measured is not what the person says his/her beliefs and values are, but what his/her actions exhibit.

Culture is subject to development and change over a period of time because of the learning going on within the organization. This change is normally incremental and evolutionary and is affected by both external and internal environmental factors. The importance is in understanding the assumptions that leaders, managers, and employees have brought with them and determining how these assumptions have had an impact on the development of the present culture. It is also important to determine the actual

experience from people within the organization in their adapting to the internal and external environments.

In conducting the historical research, the main emphasis is determining how the culture is embedded in the organization and what significant events may have led to significant changes in the organizational culture. The evolution of the organization to how it exists now may give insight to the culture. Conflicts between leaders, union, and management as well as changes in organizational philosophy will all have an effect on the people within the organization. The researcher must determine how the organization is designed and structured for its decisionmaking and communications flow. It is also important to determine how the organization responds to crises and other critical events and what has been learned from these experiences. This historical research will provide a basis upon which to build an understanding of the culture, and why it exists as it does today.

The descriptive research practices are used to gather information for determining and reporting on the present status of the culture. The purpose is to clarify and report on the way things are now. This process can involve assessing attitudes and/or opinions. The problem with measuring feelings and attitudes is that they are highly changeable. In reacting to day-to-day events a person may be content one day and highly agitated and disagreeable the next. Therefore, the instrument used in this research project deals in descriptions, not feelings and attitudes.

The instrument is designed to describe what happens, and how much of something is present, not feelings, or likes and dislikes. The Survey of Organizations-2000 (SOO-2000), developed and provided by Rensis Likert Associates, Inc., was chosen as the appropriate survey instrument. The decision to purchase a survey instead of creating one is based on the need for establishing validity and reliability in a survey instrument in order to permit replication of the research. The SOO was first developed in 1967 and has undergone many revisions. The main purpose of this instrument is to measure characteristics of the organizational units according to variables reflecting features of organizational climate, managerial leadership, peer behavior, satisfaction, and group process (Motowidlo, 1994). This provides a descriptive measure of the prevailing conditions as perceived by the members of the organization.

The survey examines four categories of the organization. It measures the overall Organizational Culture, which deals with the organization-wide conditions, policies, and practices. The second category is Supervisory-leadership, which relates to the interpersonal and task-related behaviors displayed by superiors toward their subordinates. The Peer Relationships are a measure of the interpersonal and task-related behaviors of the work group. The

final category is a measure of the way the group works together as a team. This then becomes an overall measure of the organization as summarized in the End Results.

The general population to be utilized within this research project was identified as the firefighters, line officers and administrative chief officers. These populations were then broken down into three groups for individual study. The firefighters' answer sheets were separated and computed as a group. This group is identified in the data sheets as Work Group 300, with the number surveyed n=32. The second group consisted of the middle managers of the organization and is represented by the lieutenants. It is Work Group 200, with the number surveyed n=6. The third group consisted of the three battalion chiefs who are assigned to platoon duties, the deputy chief, EMS chief, and the fire marshal. They are identified as Work Group 100, with the number surveyed n=6. The last part of the survey consisted of an overall mean of all respondents in the organization and is identified as ALL RESPONDENTS IN ORGANIZATION, with the number surveyed n=44.

The initial phase of the research project consisted of obtaining the permission from Fire Chief Robert Sponseller to purchase and conduct the survey. The author also met with Dr. Robert Scherer, Chair of Department of Management, Wright State University, to obtain his assistance in analyzing and interpreting the author's work to remove any prejudicial biases.

The distribution and completion of the survey instruments was the next phase. The author met with all 44 members of the department who would be utilized as the study population. This was undertaken by visiting each station, on each platoon day, until all survey instruments were delivered. The purpose of the study was explained to each member, confidentiality was assured, and all members were asked to be as candid and honest as possible in their individual responses. This took approximately two weeks to accomplish as there were many people on vacation and school leave. There was only one firefighter who could not be reached during the survey period due to his being off work for extended injury leave, from which he has since retired. Based on the fact that this employee did retire without returning to work, the author will state that 100 percent of the study population was contacted and participated in the research project. After all the survey instruments were completed, they were returned to Rensis Likert and Associates for computer evaluation.

While this process was being undertaken, the author completed the literature review and also compiled the historical data necessary for analysis. This included compiling and reviewing the historical growth of the fire department, analyzing the backgrounds of the past fire chiefs and reviewing significant past events which may have led to changes in the culture of the department.

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The initial evaluation of the aggregate scores was completed by the author and Dr. Scherer. Based on the scoring method used by the SOO-2000, we were able to determine the strengths and weaknesses of the organization.

A secondary evaluation of the information by the author involved an analysis of each individual question and the corresponding responses by each of the subpopulations and the ALL RESPONDENT means. This required the data to be drawn from the original score sheets and placed on a chart so that all subpopulations could be seen at one time (see Figure 1). This process was performed in order to verify the results found in the initial evaluation and to interpret the reason why the results appeared as they did.

It also was necessary to determine why, in some cases, two of the three subpopulations were below the percentile norms while the third was significantly above the percentile norm. In most cases, the final determination as to whether or not to classify a primary index question as being a strength, weakness, or within the percentile norm was based on the mean of the ALL RESPONDENT score. If there were no percentile norm scores for comparison, the average (mean) scores were used. As an arbitrary value, this author chose to use a value of 4.0 or above to reflect a strength, and 2.0 or below to reflect a weakness. These numbers have no mathematical significance. In most cases, this method of interpretation remains consistent with the use of the percentile norm scores for identifying strengths and weaknesses.

As stated in the limitations for this project, the general population used for establishing comparison norms is state/local public service employees, not firefighters. Therefore, there are some areas that, in comparison with the norms, reflect a weakness within this fire service organization when, in reality, it may not be a weakness. In those few cases, I have identified the nature of the weakness, or strength, and have elaborated on the information with reasoning for my interpretation.

After the data evaluation was completed and the findings, results, and recommendations were outlined in the draft copy of the research project, they were reviewed with Dr. Robert Scherer and Firefighter Donald Sherlock.

It must be noted that the research is only the first phase of an ongoing project. To best utilize this research information, the author will use Survey-Guided Development (SGD). This is a problem-solving process, in which problems are defined in terms of the gap between where the organization is now and where it wants to be.

The following limitations shall be considered in regard to the data obtained and the results of this research project:

1. The SOO-2000 measures four outcomes: organizational culture, leadership, peer relationships, and end results. For the purpose of this research project only the outcomes affecting organizational culture and end results will be reported.
2. The initial and secondary evaluations of the data were conducted by the author, which could project some bias, and reviewed by the two aforementioned individuals.
3. This survey is not fire service specific. The norm comparisons for the "Organizational Level Norms - Percentile Plot" are based on state/local public service employees.

Definitions of Terms

The following terms were used in this research and are presented here for the purpose of clarity:

Battalion Chief	A supervisor of the platoon of personnel on duty for the shift.
Culture	The shared assumptions, beliefs, and values of a group or organization.
Deputy Chief	A person who directs the operations and coordination of the fire department. Second in command.
EMS Chief	A person who coordinates training and administrative duties involving the paramedics.
Firefighter	A line employee assigned to an engine, ladder, or medic unit.
Fire Marshal	A person who directs the fire prevention and public education programs and conducts arson investigation.
Lieutenant	A supervisor assigned to a firehouse to oversee activities of the firefighters.
Line Officers	Any officer assigned to a firehouse on a platoon schedule.

Percentile Norm	Average response of this group to the responses of all comparable groups in the databank at the same level.
Primary Index Questions	Questions that are grouped together to give an overall picture on a specific dimension.
Subpopulation	A small, specific group taken from the general population study group.
Study Population	The group of people identified as study participants.
Weakness	An aggregate score below the percentile norm or equal to or greater than 2.0 when no percentile norm exists.
Strength	An aggregate score above the percentile norm or equal to greater than 4.0 when no percentile norm exists.

RESULTS

The results of the research project come from the collection, dissemination, and comprehensive evaluation of all the data collected in comparison with what is considered organizational norms. There are two main goals which this author undertook: one is to answer the research questions as outlined in the Introduction; the second is to identify any additional findings, or influences which may be beneficial to the organization.

The process required the careful analysis of each survey category, and each survey question having an influence upon that particular category. The first step was to identify the strengths and weaknesses within the organization. The second step was to determine the elements of the organizational culture and then try to define the organizational culture. This author will not attempt to place just one label on the organization as it appears that there is enough fragmentation within the culture that more than one culture may actually exist.

The results of this project have been grouped and summarized in text form to provide greater clarity and better understanding for the reader. The reader will find a more descriptive and indepth summary of the SOO-2000 research instrument and all the data returned by the Rensis Likert and Associates Group in the appendix.

Research Question 1 (see Table 1, Appendix A)

What are the strengths and weaknesses within the Fairborn Fire Department that have the greatest impact on its present organizational culture?

Strengths

Work Group 100 (Chief Officers-Top Management)

1. The communications flow among the chief officers is adequately shared.
2. Influence and control are distributed across all levels.
3. There is an absence of bureaucracy which allows the practices and procedures of the organization to help keep the organization running smoothly.
4. The organization allows the employees in this work group to meet personal goals.
5. The experience and expectations with the organization allow for satisfaction among the members of this work group.
6. Respondents are generally satisfied with their level of personal performance.

Work Group 200 (Lieutenants-Middle Management)

1. Influence and control are distributed across all levels.
2. Job challenge allows this work group to enjoy day-to-day activities.
3. Performance as a group within the individual fire stations and/or platoons, or isolated work groups, provides for satisfaction.
4. Respondents are generally satisfied with their level of personal performance.

Work Group 300 (Firefighters-Line Personnel)

1. Performance as a group within the individual fire stations and/or platoons, or isolated work groups provides for satisfaction.

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2. Respondents are generally satisfied with their level of personal performance.

All Respondents In Organization (Compilation of Work Groups)

1. Job challenge allows the work group to enjoy the day-to-day activities.
2. Performance as a group within the individual fire stations and/or platoons, or isolated work groups, provides for satisfaction.
3. Respondents are generally satisfied with their level of personal performance.

Weaknesses

Work Group 100 (Chief Officers-Top Management)

1. There is an absence of job rewards, in regards to recognition, respect, or providing for advancement, for doing a job well.
2. This work group does not know what is expected of them, or how their job fits into the organization's overall plan.
3. Lack of adequate feedback as to how well an employee is performing.
4. Lack of goals and objectives to guide this group in effective use of time and efforts.
5. There is a lack of coordination and cooperation among this group; problems are discussed but often go unresolved.
6. This work group does not plan and coordinate its efforts.
7. Information about important events and situations is not shared.

Work Group 200 (Lieutenants-Middle Management)

1. This work group does not believe that there is a real interest in the welfare and overall satisfaction of those who work within the organization.

2. There is an absence of job rewards, in regards to recognition, respect, or providing for advancement, for doing a job well.
3. Lack of organizational goals and objectives to guide this group in effective use of time and efforts.
4. There is a lack of coordination and cooperation; problems are discussed but often go unresolved.
5. This work group does not see planning and coordination to guide its efforts.
6. Information about important events and situations is not shared.
7. There is a lack of goal integration requiring employees to meet organizational goals while at the same time also meeting personal goals.
8. There is a lack of satisfaction with the organization as a whole, and the chances for future advancement.

Work Group 300 (Firefighters-Line Personnel)

1. Lack of communications across the hierarchical and unit boundaries to allow effective teamwork.
2. This work group feels that upper management is not receptive to ideas and suggestions of people closest to the issue.
3. This work group does not believe that there is a real interest in the welfare and overall satisfaction of those who work within the organization.
4. This work group believes that first-line supervisors, and their individual work group, have no influence on the organization's activities.

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5. There is an absence of job rewards, in regards to recognition, respect, or providing for advancement, for doing a job well.
 6. Lack of organizational goals and objectives to guide this group in effective use of time and efforts.
 7. This work group sees themselves tied down by red tape and constant referrals that prohibit them from doing their job effectively.
 8. There is a lack of coordination and cooperation among the work groups; problems are discussed but often go unresolved.
 9. This work group does not see planning and coordination to guide its efforts.
 10. Information about important events and situations is not shared.
 11. There is a lack of goal integration requiring employees to meet organizational goals while at the same time also meeting personal goals.
 12. There is a lack of satisfaction with the organization as a whole, and the chances for future advancement.

All Respondents In Organization (Compilation of Work Groups)

1. Lack of communications across the hierarchical and unit boundaries to allow effective teamwork.
2. The work groups generally feel that upper management is not receptive to ideas and suggestions of people closest to the issue.
3. The work groups (200, 300), do not believe that there is a real interest in the welfare and overall satisfaction of those who work within the organization.
4. There is an absence of job rewards, in regards to recognition, respect, or providing for advancement, for doing a job well.
5. There is a general lack of goals and objectives to guide the organization in effective use of time and efforts.
6. There is a lack of coordination and cooperation within the organization; problems are perceived as being discussed but often go unresolved.

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7. There is a lack of planning and coordinating to guide the efforts of the work groups and the organization.
 8. Information about important events and situations is not shared within the organization.
 9. There is a lack of goal integration requiring employees to meet organizational goals while at the same time also meeting personal goals.
 10. There is a lack of satisfaction with the organization as a whole, and chances for future advancement.

Research Question 2 (see Table 2, Appendix B)

What are the elements of the organizational culture within the Fairborn Fire Department?

The elements of the culture are derived from the shared feelings, beliefs, and assumptions. These are a few of the elements found during the discussions with the personnel during the initial meetings before the surveys were distributed. These were difficult to interpret and identify.

1. The members perceive the services they provide to the citizens as being essential.
2. The organization and its members are respected and supported by the citizens, who are satisfied with the quality and level of service provided.
3. Members perceive themselves as being trained for the job, but they also want more intense, appropriate, and pertinent training in order to meet their full capability and capacity.
4. There is a tendency for folklore, history, and past experiences to be shared with new members as they are ingrained to the culture.
5. There is a general feeling that duty time could be better managed and more productive.
6. There is a strong desire to be recognized for a job well done.

Research Question 3

How can the organizational culture be defined?

The culture of the organization is one of disparity between the values and beliefs of the upper management and those of the line personnel. The upper management has operative values of hierarchy and secrecy, with an obvious disparity between the official and actual values. On the other hand, the lieutenants and firefighters see themselves as well-trained, qualified people who are being held back by upper management and not allowed to meet their full capability and capacity. As a whole, the organization respects the history of the organization, but does not embrace and carry on any strong traditions. Folklore is present with the sharing of values and learning from the past. Symbols of culture are prevalent in the use of individual station logos and insignia.

DISCUSSION

The decision to undertake such an arduous and time consuming task as the evaluation of the organizational culture of the Fairborn Fire Department was made due to the tension and dissension presently seen within the organization. There have been many major management changes within the past couple of years and they have not been without controversy. This has created the appearance of a dysfunctional organization in need of improvements in management techniques and employee relations.

These are exactly the ideas that were expressed by the new fire chief when he first took office. The ideas for teambuilding and organizational development were immediately discussed and pursued. Therefore, it was most appropriate to begin a complete and comprehensive study of the organizational culture.

It was understood from the very beginning of the project that there are perceptions already in place, opinions already formed, and doubts already cast. The intent of the research then becomes one of identifying the strengths within the organization that can be built upon, and the weaknesses that present themselves as opportunities for change. The survey results and historical data collection support the need for organizational development and cultural change.

A review of nearly three dozen references of the work and written materials of other researchers, relative to this subject matter, made it clear just how difficult this task would become.

A point that must be made is that this research project is a report of the findings of the survey conducted, and that the aggregate data are listed in the

appendix to provide support for any findings and arguments listed. As much as possible, this author has made an attempt to keep any personal perceptions out of this report.

There is substantiating evidence that every organization has some type of culture. That culture represents a set of shared values and beliefs which form a set of customs and typical patterns. It is assumed that an organization that has any history at all has developed some sort of culture and that this will have a vital impact on the degree of success of any efforts to alter or improve the organization (Graves, 1975).

For a manager to be effective within an organization he/she must acknowledge and understand that organizational culture is a major component to reckon with. In reflecting upon the nature of managerial authority, the attitudes of those highest in the organization toward such propositions determine in large part the organizational culture. There may be an emphasis on personal loyalties or work ethics, and relationships; it may be democratic or authoritarian; and it may be very hierarchical. A manager then succeeds or fails according to the technical, intellectual, and social skills brought to the job, and in accordance with his/her ability to fit within the culture of the job.

The study of organizational culture provides a definition of a pattern of basic assumptions--invested, discovered, or developed by a given group as it learns to cope with its problems of external adaptation and internal integration--that has worked well enough to be considered valid and, therefore, to be taught to new members as the correct way to perceive, think, and feel in relation to these problems. The culture then becomes a major factor in determining the behaviors or actions by letting people know what is acceptable and what is not acceptable. These patterns of basic assumptions then become viewed as a set of understandings or meanings shared by that group of people. This definition then lends validity to the fact that many other organizational components, other than just employee attitudes, must also be considered in any assessment of the organization as a whole.

To get a truly comprehensive picture of the department's culture, the following organizational components must be assessed.

1. The basic organizational beliefs, expectations, and shared values which set the environment for quality of service provided.
2. The group relations in regards to openness and trust among department members.
3. The history of the organization's growth and development, with emphasis on folklore, and stories of past events.

4. The leadership styles throughout the organization, and how leadership is shared and promoted.
5. The lines of communication through the organization, with emphasis on free, creative, and effective communication of ideas.
6. The task commitment, with goals and objectives clearly defined, with evidence of commitment to support and achieve them.
7. The reward system which recognizes challenging work, combined with a system that adequately rewards persons for their efforts and achievements.
8. The spirit of cooperation which may exist between individuals and among the various parts of the department, with special emphasis on teamwork.

It becomes the duty of the fire chief and the management team to be constantly alert to any problem areas within the organization. The chief must take full responsibility for correcting any problems which occur within the organization. There must be a strict code of conduct and ethics established. Any activities that are detrimental to the organization must be quickly identified and resolved. This must be done by identifying the source of the problem and dealing directly with that source. A shotgun approach will not resolve a problem and may only manifest the idea that management cannot deal with problems correctly.

In order for such methods to work, the administrative team must be beyond reproach. It must be understood that factionalism and prejudice will inhibit the functioning of the organization. There are no devices or systems of operation that can replace a strict code of conduct or reverence for the truth (Kovacs, 1989). As indicated in the "Results," the strengths of the organization were identified among the three subpopulations. These are the areas where the organization showed strong consensus, and provided some leading indicators as to the areas where the organization was healthy. It must be noted that there are areas of discrepancy among the three groups, with the consensus of the three subpopulations providing the following assumptions.

1. The challenge of the job allows the work groups to enjoy the day-to-day activities.
2. The performance as a group within the fire stations and/or platoons, or isolated work groups, provides for satisfaction.

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3. Respondents are generally satisfied with their level of personal performance.

The weaknesses which currently exist within the organization were defined in the survey. The weaknesses are easy to ignore and be rationalized as being one individual's perception. This idea can be quickly discarded by further analyzing the exact number of respondent answers to each of the primary index questions. It then becomes apparent that many of the weaknesses are widespread beliefs among the respondents within the subpopulation.

These weaknesses should not be looked upon in a negative manner. The weaknesses can be viewed as a positive from the aspect that they have been adequately identified and will provide the organization a starting point for organizational development and cultural change.

In our personal lives, it is very easy to identify and accept our strengths. But our weaknesses are another story. We try to hide from them and ignore that they exist. There is also a tendency to place blame on others for our own weaknesses. When our weaknesses become too difficult to deal with, we begin the process necessary to identify and deal with them.

This same scenario is true with an organization. Once the weaknesses of the organization have been identified, the process of setting goals and objectives to transform these weaknesses into strengths can begin. A total commitment to this transformation will result in a stronger, healthier, and more effective organization.

It needs to be stressed that the weaknesses identified are not necessarily negative responses. They were drawn from a measurement against other public service workers, not fire service related. The answers provided by the Fairborn Fire Department respondents were measured against the other respondents and placed on a graph representing a percentile norm. Any answer that fell below that percentile norm was examined as being a weakness. They do not indicate that this organization is performing poorly in these areas. What they do indicate is that there is a lack of consensus among the three subpopulations. This provides the organization a starting point for taking steps for improvement in these areas.

In interpreting the findings of this research project, I have discovered the following factors contributing to the existence of the weaknesses identified.

These factors fall below the percentile norms among ALL THREE subpopulations' responses and therefore they represent a total consensus that this area is a weakness. (See Table 3, Appendix C.)

1. There is a lack of job reward and recognition.

There is very strong consensus among the employees that the organization fails to recognize and reward employees for doing a good job. This factor may account for the lack of motivation found among some members. In organizations where rewards are clearly tied to performance, employees are motivated because there are incentives to work hard. Recognition, awards, and advancements are effective motivators. The failure to recognize and acknowledge employees' performance will have a very detrimental effect on employees motivation as they will feel that they are being taken advantage of.

2. There is a lack of structure and organization of the work.

There is a very strong consensus among all three groups that the organization does not have clearly stated goals and objectives. Therefore, no one knows how his/her own efforts assist in the organization's overall effectiveness. In an organization where the goals and objectives are clear and sensible, the work becomes better organized and employees feel their time and efforts are used efficiently. This factor also lends itself to the problem of lack of coordination among the work groups. Goals and objectives become the game plan for the organization. Imagine beginning fire operations at a major fire with exposures and lives threatened. If the incident commander fails to size up the problem and establish clear goals and objectives, the fireground becomes one of chaos and freelancing, with ineffective use of resources. This same scenario occurs when there is a failure to develop a game plan for the organization.

3. There is a consensus that a lack of leadership and teamwork exists.

Once again, this factor can be traced to the lack of established goals and objectives. Goal emphasis provides a perspective and a focus for employees and helps generate the motivation for getting the job done. Supervisors who emphasize teamwork, and encourage employees to work together toward common goals are good at teambuilding. If there are no common goals established, then there is no direction for the team to follow, and thus a lack of coordination of effort. In organizations where teamwork is a high priority, employees will look at the whole picture when doing their job. They will take ownership with the organization and become

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motivated to make their personal efforts improve the whole organization's performance and appearance.

4. There is a lack of support among members toward their co-workers.

Peer support is a very effective force in motivating employees. It can also go a long way toward preventing and easing tensions which may occur in everyday routines. In a job where a firefighter's life might depend on a co-worker, it should be obvious that the firefighter would want to help the co-worker in every possible way to be the best. Co-workers should be open to sharing information and ideas in order to keep the group's objectives in mind when doing a job. If peer support fails to encourage teamwork, co-workers may focus only on their own job, and fail to take advantage of the skills and knowledge of the other members of the group. In a job where teamwork on the fireground is essential for survival, it only makes sense to begin building that teamwork and peer support during daily duties around the fire station. It is also very important to establish pride in a team's ability to function well as a group. This is accomplished by setting high performance standards for the group. Then, when co-workers see another employee eager to do well, they too may become encouraged and challenged to take pride in their work.

5. There is a lack of group functioning.

The combination of strong leadership and peer support relationships will result in a team that is better able to plan and coordinate its efforts. The establishment of clear and sensible goals and objectives provides the game plan for all members to follow. The time and efforts of the team members can then be utilized in a timely and efficient manner. It also provides for an organization whose members can pull together as a team and respond quickly and efficiently in times of crisis and unusual demands.

The fire service is in a period of transition where younger and smarter recruits are being hired, many of whom have college educations. These employees, and many others, are constantly seeking greater personal capacity. This requires greater employee flexibility, feedback, and involvement in job growth and performance. Therefore, the days of the autocratic, authoritarian fire chief have expired. We need to climb out of the entrenchment of the paramilitary style of organizational management and face the fact that the external environment is requiring us to change. Today's fire chief must have a

thorough knowledge of business and personnel management. That is why so many classified ads are requiring college degrees or graduation from the National Fire Academy's Executive Fire Officer Program. The increasing pressures to resolve greater technical, social, and administrative issues require a fire chief with the management experience and education to understand the issues and develop an effective, supportive, and well-aligned management team.

This research project has identified those areas within the organization where we are performing well, and those areas which provide an opportunity for improvement. This will help the organization determine the direction that needs to be taken to become more effective and efficient.

The results of the project provide the opportunity to see the benefits of taking an objective look at the organization from the perspective of its members. Knowing how the members of the organization perceive its ability to function, we as leaders cannot ignore the input of these members if we are going to be effective in organizational development and change.

The members of the organization must understand that we will never eliminate all of the weaknesses or other problems which may exist in the organization, and those areas that are changeable may take years to accomplish. What is important is the fact that an evaluative approach has been taken to measure the members' perceptions, and their input will allow great strides in making this a viable and effective organization, one the members can be proud of.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations are supported by the data collected, and its analysis and interpretation.

These recommendations are based on the findings of the research and will address the identified strengths and weaknesses, the organizational culture, and additional considerations.

I will address the five items identified in the "Discussion" section, and then elaborate more thoroughly on the additional considerations and the methodology for implementing change.

Award Program

This area of concern is already under consideration for change and a new method for nominating and identifying award winners has been accepted

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for implementation by both the union and management. It is intended to distribute the awards in a more fair and unbiased fashion. The end result would be to rightfully acknowledge those who do an exceptional job in a manner that makes them proud to receive the award.

Structure and Organization

The fire department mission statement should be reviewed for necessary changes. It should then be posted in each fire station in order to provide a view of the primary objective, purpose, responsibility, and values of the organization.

The development and use of goals and objectives will give direction and serve as a basis for the planning steps required to meet specific targets of accomplishment.

All members of the fire department must have a vision of the organization's goals and objectives in order to provide for coordination and overall effectiveness.

Leadership and Teamwork

The top managers in any organization should not only understand their function, but should establish a direction for the entire management team.

Managers should not be afraid to discard the outdated paramilitary idea of management which uses autocratic leadership. Management teams must strike a balance between consistency and flexibility. In order to achieve appropriate balance, there is a need for clear vision of where the fire department is going, and a clear set of goals and objectives to lead you there.

Top managers must understand that trust is a critical issue. The fire chief, and all other chief officers, need to become more visible throughout the respective fire stations on a regular basis. The process of Management By Walking Around (MBWA) is very effective in keeping the organization apprised of current issues facing the organization. It also will improve the informal communications process.

Be open and honest, don't tell half-truths, lies, or promote rumors.

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The chief officer, and all other officers, need to be cognizant of the need to provide effective, ongoing feedback to employees regarding job performance.

Teambuilding should become a priority of the management team.

The implementation of an ongoing officers' training program covering the subjects of leadership, time management, and interpersonal communications is recommended.

Teambuilding sessions need to be implemented to reduce factionalism, and to build trust and coordinate efforts.

Give employees the chance to accept ownership of programs.

Peer Support

Supervisors need to encourage teamwork among co-workers.

Co-workers need to learn to be open to others' ideas and opinions, and take advantage of the knowledge and experience they may have.

Supervisors need to promote pride and enthusiasm among the co-workers.

Set high performance standards for the groups.

Group Functioning

Establish a clear and sensible mission statement.

Establish goals and objectives to serve as a game plan.

Develop strong leadership perspectives.

The Survey Of Organizations (SOO-2000) provides a basic problem-solving process known as Survey-Guided Development (SGD).

It is this author's recommendation that the organization use this process in developing solutions to the problems identified. The use of the "Action Planning Form," (see appendix), will be required during work group survey feedback sessions. This will provide identification of problems the group has in working together, prioritize these problems, develop appropriate solutions, and then establish an action plan to implement the solutions. It is a highly structured and goal-oriented process that focuses on the true problems, not symptoms.

The organizational culture has been identified and provides a baseline for future observations.

The strengths of the organization have been identified and should become standards by which future organizational performance can be measured.

The mission statement, goals, and objectives need to be reviewed annually to ensure that they strengthen the organization.

It must be remembered that the people of this organization are its greatest resource, and management must make a concerted effort to use this resource effectively and efficiently.

This research project was undertaken in a positive, open-minded approach with the intent being to provide a foundation upon which to build organizational development. It is now up to management to determine the worth of the project and to set the course for organizational change and development in their desired direction.

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