LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT FOR THE FIRE SERVICE

By

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We accept this thesis as conforming

to the required standard

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ABSTRACT

        This project focuses on the issue of leadership development within the fire service and to identify strategies to better prepare individuals for when they assume leadership roles. The research method was quantitative with the undertaking of an on-line survey of firefighters at all rank levels. The findings of this project indicate that there is a need for more comprehensive leadership development and also willingness of those within the fire to undertake the necessary education to fulfill this need. The results indicate that firefighters will embrace new strategies so that they may become proficient leaders. This project provides recommendations for the individual, their organization, and educational institutions on how to achieve this goal. The Fire & Safety Division of the Justice Institute of British Columbia sponsored this project. The data will benefit all organizations as they review their curricula for fire officer development programs.

Sometimes I feel that my life is a series of trapeze swings. I'm either hanging on to a trapeze bar swinging along or, for a few moments in my life, I'm hurtling across space in between trapeze bars.

In my heart of hearts I know that for me to grow I must release my grip on the present, well known bar, and move on the new one. Each time it happens I hope, no, I pray, that I won't have to grab that new one. But in my knowing place I know that I must totally release my grasp on the old bar and for some moment in time I must hurtle across space before I can grip on to the new one.

Each time I'm filled with terror. It doesn't matter that in all my previous hurtles across the void of knowing, I have always made it. Each time I'm afraid that I'll miss—that I'll be crushed on the unseen rocks in the bottomless chasm between the bars. But I do it anyway—maybe this is the essence of what the mystics call the "faith experience"—no guarantees, no net, no insurance policy.

> —Danaan Parry (n.d., ¶ 4)

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CHAPTER ONE - STUDY BACKGROUND

The Problem/Opportunity

Leadership positions in the British Columbia fire service are part of the hierarchical structure. This structure includes firefighters, lieutenants, captains, and chief officers. Entering into these leadership positions is through a promotional process. Depending on the type of fire department, the process is usually one of two general methods. One, fire departments with collective agreements have a Lock Step Seniority process specified in the contract. Two, fire departments that use all-volunteer and paid-on-call firefighters elect their leaders from the membership. In both processes, seniority and popularity outweigh merit and competency performance.

After an individual receives employment as a firefighter, the fire service organization continues to concentrate on the development of the entry-level skill set. The goal is for the firefighter to achieve "unconscious competency" described as a high level of mastery (Gasaway, 2003).

The next step in the development of the firefighter is to prepare for a leadership role within the organization. Most of the education builds on the introductory skill set of fire ground operations. This prescriptive model approach is an outcome of the National Fire Protection Association's (NFPA) Technical Correlating Committee on Professional Qualifications. The committee reports to the NFPA membership and has developed *NFPA 1021: Standard for Fire Officer Professional Qualifications* (National Fire Protection Association [NFPA], 1997). The intent of this standard is to ensure the individual has the expected Job Performance Requirements and other skills to be a leader in the fire service.

The NFPA 1021 standard is comprehensive in laying out prescribed performance requirements of a fire service leader; however, the standard does not address the "how to" portion of achieving leadership competencies. The intent of NFPA 1021 is to be the minimum standard for individual job performance. Ideally, application of NFPA 1021 is in conjunction with other appropriate educational credentials such as a degree in fire services, general business and management, and other associated degree curricula (NFPA, 1997). Complying with NFPA 1021 with out the additional educational credentials creates a dichotomy between the minimum requirements, which the fire service views as training, and a broader perspective gained from education. Fire service providers and educational institutions are typically meeting the minimum requirements and not the full intent of this standard when preparing individuals for future leadership roles.

The Research Question

The role of NFPA standards is to provide performance indicators for the fire service. The standards are guiding principles for determining the interpretation, implementation, and effectiveness of organizational operations. In comparison, the fire service relies on NFPA standards much as accounting professionals rely on Generally Acceptable Accounting Practices, or GAAP.

Compliance with, and interpretation and implementation of NFPA standards in British Columbia are voluntary. This voluntary compliance creates the possibility that fire service organizations are not consistently implementing and meeting the intent of the standard. This situation results in disparity among individual fire service organizations in British Columbia. The absence of uniformity of compliance affects the intent of this industry benchmark.

In this research project, I explored firefighters' perception of their leaders, as well as

existing training programs that assist in the transition from firefighter to leader. The research

question I investigated was *"What skills do firefighters perceive they need to work effectively as*

a Company Officer, and how do they develop them?"

In seeking to answer the research question, I also considered a number of sub-questions:

- "What skills do firefighters think effective Company Officers possess?"

- "What gaps in training exist that would help firefighters acquire those skills?"

- "To what extent does existing training match current NFPA standards?"

Impact/Significance of the Problem/Opportunity

The absence of leadership impacts the health of an organization. Without skilled leaders,

the organization evolves into one that is stagnant and inflexible (Quinn, 1996, p. 6). This absence

causes a loss of ability to effectively deal with challenges and opportunities. The absence of

leadership affects how firefighters interact with self, peers, leaders, and organizational

objectives. This void leads to insidious interaction with clients and other agencies requiring

service from the fire department.

For an organization to survive and remain healthy in the 21st century, a highly skilled

and adaptable work force is fundamental. Many corporations outside the fire service are

responding with training practices that prepare employees for global pressures, changing

technologies, and increased diversification in the workplace (Bator, Pesavento, & Ross, 2001).

The fire service is facing these same challenges.

In their article *Staff Development Practices: Is Your Organization "Learning" in the 21st*

Century? Bator et al. (2001) discussed the trend to more responsive training practices. The theme

of the article is how to develop a culture of continuous learning. This begins with the

development of the employees and an understanding of the following factors:

- Employees must not only be able to perform the technological aspects of their jobs, but also know how to adapt to new technologies and meet or exceed customer expectations.

- Managers must now learn to become coaches and facilitators, rather than masters of work schedulers and enforcers.

Companies are now meeting challenges by shifting from one-time training events to building a culture of continuous learning within the organization. Progressive organizations identify competencies and develop a plan for each employee so s/he can improve mastery and productivity linked to these competencies. (p. 26)

From an organizational perspective, healthy, educated employees mean a healthy organization. When the employer develops the employees, not only do the employees' skills improve, but so does their self-worth. Organizations create an atmosphere for working relations between the employee and employer that are far superior to those organizations without employee development (Kouzes & Posner, 1995, p. 202).

Potential Causes of the Problem/Factors Contributing to the Opportunity

The traditional culture and the paramilitary style hierarchy that exists in fire departments are among the barriers to solving this problem. Organizations that rely on tradition and past practice become institutions and institutions become monuments. This creates an organization that is reluctant to adopt change readily (Duncan, 2000, ¶ 14).

What has not evolved with the pace of time is how the industry recruits and develops fire-fighting personnel. This is a common factor among all types of fire organizations whether they are a volunteer, composite, or career department. Previously a person's size, ethnicity, athletic ability, and nepotism, characteristics of a "white male social club" (Benoit, 1989, p. 1)

were the main determinants in the selection process. Firefighters are highly trained, expensive

assets that municipalities, on the taxpayers' behalf, invest in to ensure they get the best product.

The intent of the hiring process is to select personnel who show the capacity to become

proficient in the role of firefighter. An additional outcome is for the recruit candidates to show

potential for further development, so when the time arises, these individuals can move into

leadership roles. The absence of continuous leadership development will affect the quantity and

quality of available leaders. When the time comes to fill leadership positions, if the candidate

pool is either limited or lacking qualified candidates, the organization may need to divert from

normal operations to deal with this problem. From an organizational systems perspective, a

diversion of financial and personnel resources normally allocated for operational obligations is

necessary for solving this problem. This diversion has negative effects on normal operational

activities.

The employee has expectations to one day rise through the ranks and achieve a leadership

position. The problem for the employee to achieve this is that the process does not clearly

identify how to achieve the necessary competencies for leading a complex organization. This

lack of clarity results in individuals highly trained for the job of fire fighting but without

sufficient proficiency in leadership. Instability results without qualified internal candidates. This

instability may increase if external candidates are necessary to fill the position. Adversity and

stress increase with either absent internal candidates or the arrival of a new leader from outside

the organization.

As organizational systems, fire departments are not employment agencies or educational

institutions. However, they do have to develop the attitudes and practices of their people so that

they can be the best at what they do in support of the core services. As traditional organizations,

fire departments have a narrow focus that does not foster looking strategically at the bigger

picture. The long-standing practice of thinking that a person is doing a great job in his/her

specific capacity, so why does s/he need more training, is the largest obstacle to overcome.

Leaders need to recognize the potential of their staff and the benefits that development brings to

the entire system. Fire departments spend millions on equipment procurement, maintenance, and

training so that they can work effectively. Shifts in perspective and practice are necessary to

view firefighters as important assets to the system operation. In addition, allocation of

appropriate resources is necessary to develop, train, and maintain this asset so the system can

elaborate on its commitment to developing professional capacity.

The Organization

The Justice Institute of British Columbia, or JIBC, is a post-secondary institution with a

mission "to enhance the quality of life for all by educating and training those who make

communities safer" (Justice Institute of BC [JIBC], 2003, p. 1).

The Province of British Columbia created the JIBC in April 1978 through Order-in-

Council 1023/78, under the Colleges and Provincial Institutes Act. (Vokes, 2000) The guiding

premise is that all of the justice, public safety, and emergency response services operating in

British Columbia require a central agency to coordinate and facilitate their training. The service

model is through nine academies and divisions that deliver programs to justice and public safety

agencies that operate provincially, and to agencies that operate globally (Vokes, 2000).

When the JIBC began in 1978, it had four programs and one campus location. By the

2002/2003 year, the institute had grown to three campuses, 15 regional paramedic training

centres, and nine academic areas offering programs in 170 communities. Currently, more than

4,500 students are accessing on-line programs, with approximately 27,000 students enrolled in at

least one of 1,500 available courses (JIBC, 2003).

The JIBC's Fire and Safety Division formed through a unification of the Fire Academy and the BC Fire and Safety Training Centre in 1997. The demand for standard-based training, access to live fire training, and greater timeliness and efficiency in examination procedures was the main factor in the unification (Vokes, 2000).

The future for education in the fire service is to add academic rigor to existing programs. The JIBC (2003) is working to formalize credentials for existing programs and to create new "certificate and diploma programs that will lead to degrees" (p. 3).

In its post-incident analysis of interior wildfires, the Office of the Fire Commissioner for British Columbia (2003) determined that there are approximately 14,000 firefighters, administrators, and support staff in almost 400 fire departments province-wide. The complement of firefighters includes 11,000 all-volunteer personnel, with career and paid-on-call personnel accounting for the remaining 3,000.

The focus of this research project is to gain an understanding of what leadership competencies firefighters at all organizational levels consider are important. It is hoped that any gaps between what is deemed important and what competencies the leaders possess are identified. This information will allow individual fire organizations and the JIBC to develop strategies to close these perceived gaps. The participants in this project represent all types of fire service organizations.

In a career fire department, it may be 15 to 20 years before an individual has enough seniority to enter the fire officer training program. This situation exists in varying degrees in larger all-volunteer and paid-on-call departments. During the time that individuals wait for officer training, the organization could begin to develop leaders and leadership competencies in

individuals, to better prepare them for their future role.

CHAPTER TWO – INFORMATION REVIEW

Review of Organizational Documents

To determine leadership competencies for firefighters, it is important to begin with the National Fire Protection Association, or NFPA. The NFPA is an international non-profit organization that develops fire and life safety standards. The standard development process uses Technical Committees with representatives from all fields to provide an advocate consensus based codes and standards (NFPA, 2004). In British Columbia, the standards for firefighter qualifications are the NFPA standards. Specifically they are

- NFPA 1000 Standard for Fire Service Professional Qualifications Accreditation and Certification Systems

- NFPA 1001 Standard for Fire Fighter Professional Qualifications

- NFPA 1002 Standard for Fire Apparatus Driver/Operator Professional Qualifications

- NFPA 1003 Standard for Airport Fire Fighter Professional Qualifications

- NFPA 1006 Standard for Rescue Technician Professional Qualifications

- NFPA 1021 Standard for Fire Officer Professional Qualifications

- NFPA 1031 Standard for Professional Qualifications for Fire Inspector and Plan Examiner

- NFPA 1033 Standard for Professional Qualifications for Fire Investigator

- NFPA 1035 Standard for Professional Qualifications for Public Fire and Life Safety Educator

- NFPA 1041 Standard for Fire Service Instructor Professional Qualifications

- NFPA 1051 Standard for Wildland Fire Fighter Professional Qualifications

- NFPA 1061 Standard for Professional Qualifications for Public Safety

  Telecommunicator

- NFPA 1071 Standard for Emergency Vehicle Technician Professional Qualifications

- NFPA 1081 Standard for Industrial Fire Brigade Member Professional Qualifications

  (NFPA, 2003, List of NFPA Standards by Document Number).

This comprehensive list covers those standards directly related to individual

qualifications. The complete list of NFPA standards includes the areas of building construction,

electrical installations, and manufacturing processes.

Formal training of the British Columbia fire service began before the formation of the

Fire Academy and the Justice Institute of BC (JIBC) in 1978. The federal government in the

post-World War 2 era had administered a civil defence program. Each provincial fire marshal

had to maintain an inventory of trained firefighters should a nuclear attack occur. The program

evolved into the Provincial Emergency Fire Fighting Dispersal Plan. This program provided free

on-site training from a training unit that traveled the province. The program existed in one form

or another from the 1950s to the 1970s (Vokes, 2000).

On October 7, 1974, the Honourable A. B. Macdonald, Attorney General for the Province

of British Columbia, asked Dr. Hugh L. Keenlyside to undertake a study of the fire-fighting

situation in British Columbia. The Attorney General had received information from many

sources that the fire service had been neglected for some time with a "resulting deterioration in

their quality and deep dissatisfaction among their personnel" (Keenlyside, 1975, p. 11).

The Keenlyside report made 41 recommendations that covered everything from the

publication of statistics to the colour of fire apparatus. One of the major recommendations that

apply in the context of this research project was that "there are no qualification requirements for

fire officers; and there is no provincially recognized and enforced standard for admission to the

fire service, or for the certification of fire fighting personnel either professional or volunteer"

(Keenlyside, 1975, p. 27).

In 1979, the federal government disbanded the civil defence program. This change

included the elimination of funding for the training of fire departments. At this time, the

provincial Ministry of the Attorney General, in a follow-up to implementing some of the

recommendations of the Keenlyside report, was also rewriting the Fire Marshal Act to create

new and updated legislation known as the Fire Services Act (Vokes, 2000). This new legislation

eliminated the position of Fire Marshal and created a Fire Commissioner with expanded powers.

It did not, however, include a requirement to continue the training function, nor any requirement

relating to fire suppression except for the establishment of minimum standards for the selection

and training of fire services personnel. In April 1979, the JIBC began, with the specific mandate

to continue the training of fire department personnel (Vokes, 2000).

To guide the Justice Institute in its mandate of delivering firefighter training, curriculum-

training committees formed in 1980. The committees comprised representatives from various

interest groups, ranging from volunteer firefighters, career firefighters, fire investigators, fire

prevention officers, fire chiefs, and the career firefighters' union. The curriculum training was to

deal with the demand for programs and related curricula to meet the need of the fire service. In

1990, the provincial government created the Fire Safety Advisory Council (FSAC). The council

includes representatives from the fire service associations, the Union of British Columbia

Municipalities (UBCM), and the Insurance Bureau of Canada (IBC), plus representatives of the

public. The Council's mandate is to provide advice and recommendations on any matter related

to fire safety (Vokes, 2000).

In April 2001 a faction of this group, the Fire and Safety Division Advisory Committee (FSDAC), contracted an independent review of the perceptions of "British Columbia's fire service members in regard to training needs and performance of the Justice Institute's Fire and Safety Division" (Kinney & Malm, 2002, p. 1)). The completion of the review was by two PhD candidates from Simon Fraser University's School of Criminology. The main issue was effective program delivery by the Justice Institute, looking at specific training standards, availability, cost, curriculum content, certification, reputation, and testing (Kinney & Malm, 2002). The survey originated from concerns the FSDAC raised in a discussion paper on how the Justice Institute delivered programs to fire departments in the province (Fire and Safety Division Advisory Committee [FSDAC] (Kinney & Malm, 2002) The Justice Institute's (Vokes, 2001) response indicated that a disconnect among certain factions within the BC fire service had led to a misunderstanding of the role of the Justice Institute. Without a clear understanding of the evolution of provincial training standards, the formation of the Justice Institute, and the recommendations of the Keenlyside report, the role and responsibility of the local fire service are easily confused (Vokes, 2001).

The content of the courses in the curriculum of the Justice Institute's Fire Officer Program includes information on where the fire service is headed in terms of developing leadership competency. However, in the eight credits needed to obtain Fire Officer 1, only one 1.5-credit course addresses the human aspect of leadership, with the other credits covering the task-oriented skills of firefighting (Richardson, 2003).

Review of the Literature

First Key Concept Area of the Literature Review: Transition

"Transition is the state that change puts people into. Change is external …while

transition is internal (a psychological reorientation that people have to go through

before the change can work)."

—Bridges & Mitchell, 2000, ¶. 6

The Oxford Minidictionary (1988) defined change as "to make or become different" (p.

76) and transition as "the process of changing" (p. 554). These definitions may appear simple

when the reality is that leading and managing within an organization under these conditions is a

complex and often unsuccessful undertaking.

Barger and Kirby (1995) introduced the challenge of change in organizations with the

following example:

Employees are being told to embrace change as a way of life, to move into a future that

has no reality yet. It's asking a lot. Much of science and technology has been about

creating predictability—learning causes and effects, finding out how to influence them

and bring them under control of human beings. Now people are being told, "We don't

know, we can't know, and you have to be productive while dealing with the uncertainty.

Don't get too comfortable; it will probably be all different tomorrow." The major

structural changes now occurring in organizations and their accompanying disorder are

having a profound impact on the people who work in them. (p. 1)

Change is necessary in how the fire service develops future leaders. Leaders of the future

require skills to identify new opportunities, evaluate past practices, and nurture innovation to

cause change they lead. Change without a keen sense of the transition process will not allow the

leaders and ultimately the organization to succeed (Bridges & Mitchell, 2000).

Bridges (1991) also suggested that change always involves loss, and that the start of a

transition means making the difficult decision to lose something. The fact that this process occurs at different rates among people helps explain why people respond differently to change initiatives. Bridges discussed what he called the "neutral zone" that lies between what was and what will be. This zone is often painful and confusing for people to navigate through, but in order to transition successfully, one must successfully pass through the process.

It may appear that individuals in the organization may not have the same vision of what form this change should take. Senge et al. (1999) supported this in that people may seek to develop an organization that is "'accelerating,' 'visionary,' or 'intelligent,'" (p.4) while some try to be "'adaptive,' 'innovative,' or 'transformational.'" (p.4) Others seek to build "learning organizations." Senge et al. added:

> But despite the different labels, common aspirations guide most change efforts.
> They are trying to respond quickly to external changes and think more
> imaginatively about the future. They want better relationships; with less game
> playing and more trust and openness. They want to unleash employees' natural
> talents and enthusiasm. They hope to move genuinely closer to their customers.
> Through all of this, they are striving to shape their destiny, and thereby achieve
> long-term financial success. (p. 5)

The external changes that affect the organization relate directly to the organization type and consequently vary. The resulting perception is that whatever the external factors are, they are a current or future threat to the organization's ability to thrive in its environment (Kotter, 1996). Organizations are attempting to cope with multiple pressures resulting from financial restraints, changes in political ideologies, and changing demands from customers (Leiter & Harvie, 1997).

Despite the obvious need for the fire service to implement and respond to change, most change initiatives fail. As Senge et al. (1999) wrote:

Two independent studies conducted in the early 1990s found that out of the hundreds of corporate Total Quality Management (TQM) programs studied, about two thirds grind to a halt because of their failure to produce the hoped-for result. Reengineering has fared no better; a number of articles, including some by reengineering's founders, place the failure rate somewhere around 70%. (p. 5)

For change to occur in how the fire service develops leaders, the firefighter requires skills in identifying and maximizing the process of transition. Bridges and Mitchell (2000) spoke of three stages of transition: ending, neutral, and beginning. It is during the neutral zone that individuals are the most creative and the energy of transition creates momentum forward. The energy created during this process becomes "vision sustaining" and becomes a building block to facilitate the transition (Lundin, Paul, & Christensen, 2003, p. 75).

In any organization, harnessing this newly created energy is difficult. Before implementing the results of the new energy, one must understand the process, and what is happening during transition, and, of course, be willing to allow the process to occur. This initial step or choice may prove to be the most difficult decision for a leader to make. In the culture of the fire service, and others based in tradition, undertaking change is not easy. Yukl (1998) observed that in mature organizations, the culture influences the leader more than the leader can influence the culture. This raises the possibility that the leader, a product of the organizational culture, may not have the skills to overcome this barrier.

Kriegel and Brandt (1996) stated,

Reengineering is not a bed of roses. … Some statistics say seven out of ten

reengineering initiatives fail. And a recent study by consulting giant McKinsey

found that the majority of companies researched achieved less than 5 percent

change due to reengineering. (p. 4)

The success rate for implementing change is clearly not high. The vast majority of

change efforts are failing to produce their intended business results. Anderson and Anderson

(2001) reported,

The struggling efforts are producing huge costs to budgets, time, people, customers, and

faith in leadership. Furthermore, the very methods used in these failed efforts are causing

tremendous resistance and burnout in people, loss of employee morale, and turmoil in the

culture of organizations. (p. 2)

In a discussion of this process, it is important to understand the correlation between

"change" and "transition." Although they are distinct, they have similar characteristics, and the

two processes cannot be separated from each other. Bridges (1991) clarified that "change is

situational: the new site, the new boss, the new team roles, and the new policy. Transition is the

psychological process people go through to come to terms with the new situation. Change is

external, transition is internal" (p. 3).

The work of Bridges (1991) is supported by Quinn (1996). Quinn described change as

being either incremental or deep:

Incremental change is usually the result of a rational analysis and planning process. There

is a desired goal with a specific set of steps for reaching it. Incremental change is usually

limited in scope and is often reversible. If the change does not work out, we can always

return to the old way. Incremental change usually does not disrupt our past patterns—it is

an extension of the past. Most important, during incremental change, we feel we are in

control. (p. 3)

Experiencing the effects of the transitional process only occurs during deep change,

which Quinn (1996) defined as one that is "major in scope, discontinuous with the past, and

generally irreversible" (p. 3). The fire service is able to continually improve and build upon

known techniques to improve service delivery. These changes are traditionally incremental in

nature and a "result of a rational analysis or planning process" (p. 3). This incremental change is

not the deep change that Quinn described.

Deep change means surrendering control. The application of this concept in a

paramilitary organization is very difficult. Most strategic and planning decisions result from an

analytical, controlled process, something contrary to Quinn's (1996) position. However, in order

for an organization to benefit from the energy created during this process, the leader must

surrender control and allow the process to occur.

A profusion of literature is available on how to successfully manage change. The

literature also emphasizes that the change process fails because little attention is paid to the

people within the organization. Kriegel and Brandt (1996) stated:

People are the gatekeepers of change. They have the power to breathe life into a

program or kill it. If they are excited and positive, it's open sesame. If they're

not—and that's most of the time—it's clang! The gate is slammed shut in your

face. (p. 5)

Applying this to the fire service, the image of a Catch-22 comes to mind. How can an

organization built on a command-and-control system surrender control? Alternatively, how can a

leader developed by the culture of the organization influence the organizational culture to effect

change? The answer needs to differentiate between the ability and the willingness to carry out

such a process. Knowledge, skills, and abilities can be developed and provided to existing and

potential leaders of an organization. That is the easy part; the willingness of the individual or that

of the organization is much more difficult to develop.

O'Toole's (1995) theory is that to effectively lead change, a strategy of moral leadership

is necessary. "Moral and effective leaders listen to their followers because they respect them and

because they honestly believe that the welfare of followers is the end of leadership (and not that

followers are the means to the leader's goals)" (p. 9). O'Toole further stated that this moral

leadership emerges from, and returns to, the fundamental wants, needs, aspirations, and values of

the followers. O'Toole suggested:

> In complex, democratic settings, effective leadership will entail the factors and
>
> dimensions of vision, trust, listening, authenticity, integrity, hope, and, especially,
>
> addressing the true needs of the followers. Without these factors, the likelihood of
>
> overcoming the ever-present resistance to change is all but nil. (p. 11)

While this process described by O'Toole (1995) certainly makes sense for dealing with

change, there is the possibility that factors both, internal and external, will not meet the members

of the fire service's wants, needs, aspirations, and values.

Yukl (2002) discussed five contingency theories of leadership: path-goal theory,

multiple-linkage model, least preferred coworker (LPC) contingency theory, cognitive resource

theory, and leader substitute theory. Contingency theories can be ambiguous, making it difficult

to test specific and measurable propositions. A summary evaluation of cognitive theories in

leadership is as follows: "In general, the research suffers from lack of accurate measures and

reliance on weak research designs that do not permit strong inferences about direction of

causality" (Korman & Tanofsky, 1975 & Schriesheim & Kerr, as cited in Yukl, 2002, p. 108).

Yukl (2002) provided support for his statement from study results on the five contingency theories. In his comparative evaluation of the research results, he found that "while some contingency theories had many studies and others only a few, all were inconclusive or lacked support" (p. 109). The reason for this lack of empirical support in research may be the number of intervening situational variables. If the theories include only limited variables, they do not reflect the "real-life" situations a leader faces. On the other hand, if too many situational variables are included, the theory becomes extremely difficult to test.

Yukl's (2002) "Path-Goal Theory of Leadership" deserves further examination. The theory explains how the behaviour of a leader "influences the satisfaction and performance of subordinates" (p. 90). The theory describes four different leadership behaviours:

- Supportive Leadership. Giving consideration to the needs of subordinates, displaying concern for their welfare, and creating a friendly climate in the work unit.

- Directive leadership. Letting subordinates know what they are expected to do, giving specific guidance, asking subordinates to follow rules and procedures, scheduling and coordinating the work.

- Participative Leadership. Consulting with subordinates and taking their opinions and suggestions into account.

- Achievement-Oriented Leadership. Setting challenging goals, seeking performance improvements, emphasizing excellence in performance, and showing confidence that subordinates will attain high standards. (p. 91)

Yukl's (2002) theory suggests that exercising any one of the four leadership behaviours may become necessary depending on the specific situation. The specific task or subordinate

characteristics determine the situational variable. Consider the example of a complex and unstructured task where the subordinates are inexperienced. In this situation, directive leadership will result in higher subordinate satisfaction and effort.

O'Toole (1995) argued against contingency theories of leadership, stating:

> Paradoxically, then, contingency theory ends up being prescriptive, judgmental, and deterministic—exactly the opposite of what are claimed to be its greatest virtues. It is also ineffective in the long term: a contingent leader who acts tough even once will be seen as inconsistent, thereby destroying the trust that is essential to win people over to change. (p. 8)

O'Toole (1995) further stated:

> What is required to guide effective change is not contingency theory but rather, a new philosophy of leadership that is always and at all times focused on the hearts and minds of followers through inclusion and participation. Such a philosophy must be rooted in the most fundamental moral principles: respect for people. In this realm of morality, there are no contingencies. (p. 11)

Often, the driving force of organizational change and transition is beyond the control of the leaders of the organization. This reality occurs constantly because of a change in operational policy or an immediate need that requires action and compliance. Contingency theory may seem a viable solution in dealing with these events; however, O'Toole (1995) suggested that "leaders must begin by setting aside that culturally conditioned 'natural' instinct to lead by push, particularly when times are tough. Leaders must instead adopt the unnatural behavior of *always* leading by the pull of inspiring values" (p. 11)

The one constant in the research of organizational change and transition is that it is not

easy. Leaders and change agents must expect resistance and understand that this resistance is a natural reaction (Kriegel & Brandt, 1996). In overcoming this resistance, we must consider the needs of the people within the organization (O'Toole, 1995). Larkin and Larkin (1996) suggested that the needs of the people means "communicating only the facts, stop communicating values. Communicate face-to-face; do not rely on videos, publications or large meetings. And target frontline supervisors; do not let executives introduce the change to frontline employees" (p. 95).

Comprehending this scenario, refer to Senge et al.. (1999), who stated that "relationship is everything, when you see the world as a social system" (p. 140). An organization is a social system. "Moral and effective leaders listen to their followers because they respect them and because they honestly believe that the welfare of followers is the end result of leadership—and not that followers are the means to the leaders' goals" (O'Toole, 1995, p. 9).

Senge et al. (1999) described the initial step in this process as a conscious decision whether the process will be authority driven or learning driven. One's first thought might be that since the fire service is command-and-control oriented, the authority-driven process would be the obvious choice. Initially, this decision may prove to be a success; however, when, or if, the leader should change, or lose interest or the desire to lead this process, the process usually comes to a halt.

A process that is learning or learner driven is more successful, as it builds commitment through participation and action (Senge et al., 1999). This theory gives ownership to the individuals, as they have chosen to participate in the process. Generally, people believe that they can make a difference (Kouzes & Pozner, 1995), and a process that is learning-driven allows for this belief. The result is the creation of a self-perpetuating process that continues should the

initial leader leave and not be able to participate. The vitality of the process does not rely on one individual. The learning-oriented strategy produces self-sustaining change and continually "accelerates its own growth and development. In systems terms it operates as a 'virtuous reinforcing cycle'" (Senge et al., 1999, p. 41).

The literature offers several theories on how to manage, lead, or implement change in an organization. The reasons to change and adapt a process to facilitate transition are also abundant. One can simply turn on a newscast or read a newspaper and get the understanding that people in general are frustrated, angry, and pessimistic about their future (Kouzes & Posner, 1995) and have lost their faith in institutions. The fire service is not immune to these feelings. The fire service faces major obstacles in the years ahead as the public expects service for its tax dollars. These demands will force the fire service to expand and diversify from its traditional service delivery model (Perkins & Benoit, 1996).

In order for the fire service to adapt to and meet the needs of the community, "there must be innovation, and innovation means change" (Bridges & Mitchell, 2000, ¶ 1). In their article on "Leading Transition: A New Model for Change," Bridges and Mitchell identified that organizations cannot continue to be just "managed, replicating yesterday's practices to achieve success" (¶ 1)

> We either choose to take this journey, or are compelled to by a crisis in our lives, which forces us to ask: who are we? What have we done with our lives thus far? And where are we going? Whether we are ready or not, we are booked on a passage into the unknown. (Barnes, 2004, ¶ 7)

Second Key Concept Area of the Literature Review: Employee Development

"Our intellectual capital walks out the door every night, so the key is to make sure

they come back"

—Art de Geus, CEO of Synopsys

(as cited in Woods, 2001, ¶ 1)

The fire service of the 21st century has evolved into a highly organized system with a

paramilitary hierarchy model that utilizes a vertical power-base wherein authority or hierarchical

power is the main organizational influence (Brunacini, 1996). The fire service requires

individuals with a high level of education to manage this complexity and function effectively in

this environment (Rivenbark, 2000).

Additionally, the equipment in the fire service to deal with emergencies has increased in

complexity. The high monetary value of this equipment (in the millions of dollars) brings high

annual operating and preventive maintenance costs to ensure that everything is ready and

available for use in an emergency. Commonly overlooked are the firefighters who operate the

equipment and function within the organization.

The fire service is a traditional, hierarchical organization with a systematic profile of one

that is too slow to adapt to the changes and demands placed on organizations today (Leavitt,

2003). One way to overcome this situation and create an atmosphere of change is to begin to

develop the most important resource: the employees. This research indicates that the true power

to create high-quality service delivery lies within the organization itself (Bator et al.., 2001).

Investing in employee education is a justifiable cost, because the return on investment

presents itself in many forms, from increased production to several intrinsic values (Pate, Martin,

Beaumont, & McGoldrick, 2000). The investment begins during the hiring process and continues

with training and motivating employees, and meeting their needs. This is an essential investment, much as building factories and purchasing machinery were during the Industrial Age (Woods, 2001).

A supported and educated employee makes innovative and creative decisions (Wallace, 2000) and does not wait for direction. This adds to the organization's flexibility and ability to capitalize on new opportunities. If the organization waits until the firefighter's promotion to begin leadership development, the firefighter will not be prepared. Inadequate training for the new responsibilities will result in failure (Wallace, 2000). This delay in leadership training equals missed opportunities for the organization to harvest, develop, and fine-tune ideas and input from these individuals from the first day of employment.

Firefighters are action-oriented individuals trained to respond in circumstances in which most people never find themselves. Fire departments and fire training organizations spend considerable time and money training their staff for performance in the most dangerous of conditions. There is little value for either the individual or the organization if training and education end with only the mastery of the basic fire-fighting skills. Strict prescriptive task performance training narrows the range of effectiveness of the firefighter in the long term, whereas education and development broaden the firefighter's effectiveness (Duncan, 2000). The absence of an effective staff development program limits individual performance, and ultimately the organization will deteriorate (Senge et al., 1999).

Educating and developing employees is the beginning of becoming a learning organization. Consider that employees are part of the building blocks that form the foundation of a solid organization. Creating an atmosphere that nurtures and allows the individual the freedom to develop new thinking patterns creates opportunity (Senge et al. 1999). A learning organization

is one that individually and collectively continues to expand its knowledge. The organization

now has the skills to apply new processes to solving old problems. Threats now become

opportunities, creating independence and self-reliance (Senge et al., 1996). The health of the

organization improves at all system levels.

The fire service's unique organizational culture develops from the cohesion created

among the individuals working in small crews. Firefighters may spend more time with their co-

workers than with their families (Perkins & Benoit, 1996). At times this cohesion is

advantageous; at other times it works as "group think." Education can aid in overcoming the

barriers and allow innovation while maintaining cohesion. Senge (1996) discussed the paradox

inherent in groupthink and team learning (p. 10). An ineffective team lacks skill in the discipline

of dialogue. Senge defined dialogue as the ability to suspend assumptions and move into a state

of "thinking together." Work teams skilled in this discipline create effective team learning,

effectively dismissing the opposite action of groupthink.

The position of the National Fire Academy in the United States on higher education is

that future leaders will need the advanced skills to manage the complexities of the fire service

(Rivenbark, 2000). Duncan (2000) confirmed that professional development broadens the

knowledge and perspective of the firefighter. Applying this concept to the working environment

of the fire service, one outcome is a leader with skills to observe problems from several

directions. This increased perspective will work toward improving the effectiveness of the team.

A leader without perspective may look at the situation as merely out of his or her control. When

a leader focuses on the negative, s/he loses his or her power to react differently (Zander &

Zander, 2000, p. 104). A leader who can identify a situation and react positively is more

effective than a leader who lacks this skill. The leader's ability to use this action is also

empowering the entire team by creating a victory and improving the team members' self-reliance at the individual and team level (Kouzes & Posner, 1995).

Leaders should not completely rely on formal education to become more effective. Current leaders within the organization can create a learning environment by simply setting the example. In *The Leadership Challenge*, Kouzes and Posner (1995) devoted an entire chapter to modelling the way. Simply, leading by example builds credibility. Firefighters are always observing the conduct of their leader. This behaviour observation becomes informal mentoring relationships. The organization can develop its staff by operating in a "visible" manner (Kouzes & Posner, 1995) that is effective and supports a learning organization model. This allows the adult learner to define, understand, and apply these new experiences (MacKeracher, 1996) in a way that maintains congruence with the mission of the organization.

The evolution of the fire service into a complex organization (Rivenbark, 2000) creates the possibility of Vaill's (1996) theory that "complex systems produce novel problems" (p. 11). The fire service traditionally takes a proactive approach to planning for any emergency or call for service that may require its response. Not having the ability to effectively deal with unforeseen systematic problems will undermine the effectiveness of the organization. Leaders without the skills to operate effectively may exhibit the behaviour that Vaill (1996) described as "all thrust and no vector" (p. 15). The leader expends energy and works inefficiently toward goals that are not congruent with those of the work unit or the organization. Developing and educating employees is beneficial in overcoming fruitless work habits.

Comprehensive training for every conceivable incident may not exist for the firefighter. To prepare for this possibility, future leaders must learn the skill of becoming an "extremely effective learner" (Vaill, 1996, p. 20).

Third Key Concept Area of the Literature Review: Organizational Culture

The fire service has an organizational culture that has developed through years of operation in traditional values and paramilitary organization. Understanding this culture is important to identify solutions that will assist in shifting current attitudes toward employee development. There is potential that individuals have a perception that some of the traditional practices are a rite of passage within the organization. The leader will require skills not normally observed in the fire service to overcome these barriers.

Organizational culture has been defined as a set of processes that binds together members of an organization based on "the shared and relatively enduring pattern of basic values, beliefs, and assumptions in an organization" (Sethia & Von Glinow, 1985, p. 403)

The organizational culture of the fire service has evolved through storytelling, imitation, and enforcement of the culture's distinct rules of conduct (Hewitt, 1995 as cited in Richardson, 2003). This can be compared to the organizational culture of a family-run business. Zahra, Hayton, and Salvato (2004) studied the organizational culture of a family-run business and found that organizational culture is a tightly connected system of artifacts, espoused values, and underlying assumptions. These unique characteristics to family businesses increase the significance of organizational culture as a strategic resource (Rogoff & Heck, as cited in Zahra et al.., 2004). This mitigates the problem of goal alignment and alleviates concerns about opportunistic behaviour by agents (Chrisman, Chua, & Litz, 2002; Schulze et al.., as cited in Zahra, Hayton, & Salvato, 2004) and increasing reliance on social controls.

Organizations, such as the fire service, operate according to standards or direction set by governing authorities. This pre-determines how an organization operates which in turn influences the culture of the organization as it affects the beliefs, assumptions, and values that

drive individual and organizational decision making, actions, and behaviours (Rondeau &

Wager, 1998). Kouzes and Posner (1995) wrote:

> Standard operating procedures are the "habits" of organizations. Even the loosest
>
> of organizations adopt practices that become second nature. These cultural norms
>
> operate in subtle but powerful ways to box us in and restrict our thinking. They're
>
> especially potent barriers in times when innovation is required. (p. 65)

O'Toole (1995) discussed Evans-Pritchard's "collective representations" in that

organizational culture is a behavioural problem. O'Toole theorized that people in groups form

fixed ideas and then conspire to protect these ideas at all costs. In essence, this is what exists in a

traditional organization such as the fire service. In illustrating his presumption that the fire

service is slow to accept or adopt change, Carter (2002) used this metaphor:

> Start with a cage containing five apes.
>
> In the cage, hang a banana on a string and put stairs under it. Before long, an ape
>
> will go to the stairs and start to climb towards the banana. As soon as he touches
>
> the stairs, spray all of the apes with cold water.
>
> After a while, another ape makes an attempt with the same result—all the apes are
>
> sprayed with cold water. This continues through several more attempts. Pretty
>
> soon, when another ape tries to climb the stairs, the other apes all try to prevent it.
>
> Now, turn off the cold water. Then remove one ape from the cage and replace it
>
> with a new one. The new ape sees the banana and wants to climb the stairs. To his
>
> horror, all of the other apes attack him. After another attempt and attack, he
>
> knows that if he tries to climb the stairs, he will be assaulted.

Next, remove another of the original five apes and replace it with a new one. The

newcomer goes to the stairs and is attacked. The previous newcomer takes part in

the punishment with enthusiasm. Again, replace a third original ape with a new

one. The new one makes it to the stairs and is attacked as well. Two of the four

apes that beat him have no idea why they were not permitted to climb the stairs,

or why they are participating in the beating of the newest ape.

After replacing the fourth and fifth original apes, all the apes, which have been

sprayed with cold water have been replaced. Nevertheless, no ape ever again

approaches the stairs. Why is this?

Because that's the way they've always done it, and that's the way it's always

been around here. (¶ 1 - 7)

Carter (2002) continued by stating that some leaders in the fire service have attained their

positions of power without the necessary education. They may feel intimidated by those with an

education or from outside the organization and essentially are afraid of those things they do not

understand. Hence, they shy away from new people and new ideas. They stick to those areas

where they can maintain absolute control. And in many cases, they use fear, abuse, and

intimidation to keep people in their place. (Carter, 2002 ¶ 15)

Understanding the organizational culture of the fire service is significant in order to find

a leverage point with which to influence change. This culture has developed over generations

through "social interaction that supports myth, symbols, and rituals that are so important to the

traditionalists of the fire service" (Richardson, 2003, p. 18).

On the topic of a culture's impact on change, I asked the following question: Are there

any differences in relation to change in private sector as opposed to public sector employees?

Understanding these differences, should they exist, may lead to implementation solutions to leverage change within an organization.

Parker and Bradley (2000) suggested that "there remains a limited empirical understanding of culture in public organizations" (p. 2). They further stated that "a lack of understanding of organizational culture in the public sector is of concern because research on organizational culture indicates that culture is central to the change process and to the attainment of strategic objectives" (p. 7).

To influence this long-established culture, consider Senge (1994) as he discussed the discipline of team learning. His result is a "thinking together" status in which the group discovers insight that is not achievable on an individual level. It is important to understand that the fire service has achieved this status, albeit perhaps not in the manner that will allow for discovery and deep change through the transitional process. The leader will have to enable the organization to allow itself to dialogue with stakeholders internally and externally in order to facilitate learning. Individual learning is important but "team learning is vital" (Senge, 1994, p. 10), as teams are the fundamental unit of modern organizations.

There is a trend in the public sector to operate the organization similarly to public sector organizations. The fire service is not immune to this trend. The public expectations are such that local governments and their departments need to provide information showing accountability and proof of meeting specific outcomes. White (2000) described this trend as follows: "Public sector organizations are now expected to exhibit many features of the private sector, including some scope for entrepreneurial behavior" (p. 3).

The closer linking of public sector operations to those in the private sector is more the rule than the exception. However, the services and delivery models are very different, and

therefore the culture within the two organizations will differ. Parker and Bradley (2000) discuss these differences as they suggest that "public sector organizations are fundamentally different from private sector organizations in a number of dimensions including diversity of their goals, access to resources, and the nature of organizational constraints" (p. 7).

Research by Worrall, Cooper, and Campbell-Jamison (2000) examined the effect of organizational change on three sectors: the private sector, the public sector, and former public sectors (now private). The results of the research indicate that the more adversely affected were the public sector managers compared with those in similar positions in the other sectors. Worrall et al.. suggested the reason for this hardship was a lack of training in implementing change so as not to negatively affect their co-workers' loyalty, morale, motivation, or job security.

CHAPTER 3—RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research Methods

As captured by Kirby and McKenna (1989), "good research includes making observations, recording them fully, reporting on them in an understandable way and distributing the information to others" (p. 43).

"Action research" is a systematic and rigorous inquiry or investigation that enables people to understand the nature of problematic events or phenomena (Stringer, 1999) while using reliable and valid data (Palys, 1997). The decision to use action research may begin with asking a simple question or looking for a solution to a problem or conflict within an organization. The focus of my major project was to use action research to engage key participants and stakeholders in a process of learning and discovery to gain understanding of the leadership competencies needed in a modern fire service.

Action research also functions as a practical tool to solve existing problems (Stringer, 1999) and to explore firefighters' perceptions of leaders and leadership. The approach works to build community as affected parties come together to solve a problem (Stringer, 1999). The action research approach also evolves with appropriate influence and information from interactions with key participants. As defined by Dick (1999), action research is "a family of methodologies which pursue action and research outcomes at the same time" (¶ 1). Its central principles are cyclic, participative, qualitative, and reflective. Action research is a constructionist epistemology in which an inductive approach is used to build theory from learning—where "the theory typically evolves during the actual research in an iterative manner" (Kekale, 2001, p. 556). It is primarily concerned with people's understandings and meanings.

The doctrine of action research fits well within the fire service to engage its members on

a journey of learning, discovery, and reflection. I foresaw this journey as more than a means to

an end and saw the process with the intent of Preskill and Torres's (1999) reflections as learning

and development for individuals and organizations.

Qualitative research also fits within the construct of the fire service. Denzin and Lincoln

(2000) best described this form of research:

The word qualitative implies an emphasis on the qualities of entities and on

processes and meanings that are not experimentally examined or measured. …

qualitative researchers stress the socially constructed nature of reality, the

intimate relationship between the researcher and what is studied, and the

situational constraints that shape inquiry. Such researchers emphasize the value-

laden nature of inquiry. They seek answers to questions that stress how social

experience is created and given meaning. (p. 8)

The use of a qualitative, participative approach allows for the engagement of key

stakeholders. A qualitative approach also allows for full exploration of issues in order to capture

their depth and to assist in understanding their complexity and the context in which they exist. In

accordance with the concept of *verstehen* I, too, sought to "understand action in terms of

meaning" (Palys, 1997, p. 18).

Data-Gathering Tools

I chose a balance of quantitative and qualitative research. Gathering of qualitative

information took the form of an electronic survey with a follow-up discussion of the results with

those who were able to participate. Originally, the intent was for the online survey to act as a

foundation for analysis for a focus group. Unfortunately, a focus group session did not take

place. To assist in the triangulation of the data, I obtained feedback from individuals with

experience in data analysis and with a background in public service. Their responses were compared with the survey results and the information discovered during the literature review.

Triangulation has been defined as "the application and combination of several research methodologies in the study of the same phenomenon" (Yin, 1984, ¶ 1), and according to Denzin and Lincoln (2000), it reflects the researcher's attempt to secure a more in-depth understanding of the phenomenon in question. Triangulation "adds rigor, breadth, complexity, richness and depth" (Denzin & Lincoln, p. 5) and assists researchers to "overcome the weakness or intrinsic biases … that come from single method, single-observer, single-theory studies" (Yin, 1984, para. 3).

Using a qualitative method has also enabled the researcher to perform this research study of the fire service in a manner that is not offensive to its members. Supporting this approach, Kirby and McKenna (1989) noted that "the selection of the method is a critical aspect of researching and is usually based on what kind of information is sought, from whom and under what circumstances" (p. 62) during a time of dynamic change within the organization.

Using a variety of data collection methods minimized any biases that I held and assisted in gaining a comprehensive understanding of the data. I engaged participants with an electronic survey and followed up with a focus group to gain perspective in more than one way and at more than one opportunity. I also provided summary findings to the participants, to invite their validation and further clarification. Participants are in a unique position to provide confirmation that the information gathered and the analysis conducted accurately reflects their expressions and intents. As indicated by Denzin and Lincoln (2000), "true objectivity has been held to be the result of agreement between participants and observers as to what is really going on in a given situation. … a self-correcting investigative process" (p. 676).

To reach as many members of the BC fire service, each provincial association received, via email, an invitation to participate in the survey. In theory, the member groups potentially represent all 12,000 members of the BC fire service. The invitation also circulated among professional organizations that operate globally. The invitation generated responses from all over Canada, the United States, Australia, and New Zealand. In total, the survey generated 155 responses.

The data collected in the survey formed the foundation for theories and hypotheses for review by a focus group. Using a quantitative method such as a survey allows interaction with the data and collection in a systematic manner. Creating the opportunity for the discussion and review of this data by peers brings scientific rigor to the process (Palys, 1997).

The survey data delineated the rank and position of the respondents. In a paramilitary organization such as the fire service there is the potential for Marxist-oriented situations of competitive relationships whereby those in control maintain systems of domination to maintain their authority over the subordinate groups (Stringer, 1999). Stringer (1999) cited Foucault's study into social life, in which Focault determined that true information is not objective "because of the essential relationship in which knowledge is produced and power is exercised" (p. 196).

The invitation to participate in the survey included information on confidentiality and anonymity. The only way to identify the participants is if they chose to be identified. The survey took the form of a Web page hosted by SurveyMonkey.com. Participants received a short-cut link to the Web site and to the start of the survey. The only stipulation to participating in the survey was to work in the fire service. There was no method to verify if the participant was or was not involved with the fire service.

Storytelling is a common method used to pass along information in the fire service. There

are many opportunities for informal conversations to occur during the work day within a fire

station. Traditionally, the conveyance of a vast amount of information occurs during these

discussions (Richardson, 2003). Surveys, or questionnaires, also allow for a relatively quick

collection of a large amount of data. The survey also allowed for the collection and

dissemination of information that represents the heterogeneous groups that operate in the fire

service (Palys, 1997).

The survey has three distinct sections. The first asks respondents to rate leadership

competencies on a 5-point scale as it relates to them—for example:

1. COMMUNICATION

	Not Important At All	Slightly Important	Important	Very Important	Extremely Important
Demonstrates Active Listening Skills					
Communicates in a clear and precise manner					
Provides clear instructions and directions when giving assignments					
Demonstrates effective written communications					
Able to communicate the organization's mission, vision, and values					

The second section of the survey asked participants to evaluate their performance against

that of their supervisor using the same competencies—for example:

This section offers you an opportunity to assess your own leadership competencies and

those of your immediate supervisor. Please use the 5-point rating scale shown below. An "X"

may be used to indicate inability to assess the skill.

1 = Not Competent—is unable to perform the skill.

2 = Slightly Competent—is able to perform the skill but not consistently.

3 = Competent—is able to perform the skill consistently.

4 = Very Competent—is able to consistently perform the skill at a superior level.

5 = Extremely Competent—is able to perform the skill exceptionally well, and teach others.

X = Unable to Assess / Don't Know.

6. COMMUNICATION. Understands the basic behavioural skills of effective interpersonal communications. Listens actively and sincerely when being questioned.

	1: Not Competent	2: Slightly Competent	3: Competent	4: Very Competent	5: Extremely Competent	X: Unable to Assess
My Skill Level						
My Supervisor's Skill Level						

The third section of the survey asked for biographical and educational information from the participants. In this section, participants had the opportunity to elaborate on their role in the fire service and their education, and to provide any other comments—for example:

Question 39: What Best Describes your Position?

- Fire Chief

- Deputy Fire Chief

- Assistant Fire Chief

- Battalion Fire Chief

- Captain

- Lieutenant

- Fire Prevention Officer

- Fire Fighter

- Other.

Study Conduct

Before the research began, Royal Roads University reviewed and approved the application for an ethical review involving human research subjects. The Justice Institute did not require a similar process, as it was not using existing databases to contact students. The information for the potential participants is contained in the Survey Introductory Statement and Focus Group Consent forms. Names of participants and direct quotations remain anonymous and confidential unless the participants grant permission. The research study conformed to "minimal risk" criteria in accordance with Royal Roads University's ethics requirements.

The questions in the research survey were similar to those used in similar surveys distributed in the public sector, specifically the work of Frank Ciaccia (2001) in his study of the New Westminster Police Service and Al Rosa's (2003) study of the British Columbia Sheriff Service. The questions were refined to reflect the nature of the BC fire service and reviewed by the project sponsor and the project advisor. I used a test group of individuals to try out the survey to review the clarity of the language, use of technology, and ease of completion. Because of this input, several minor changes in the layout made it easier for an individual to complete the survey.

Distribution of the invitations to complete the survey began in March 2004, with the bulk of the responses collected during the first few weeks. A focus group scheduled for mid-April did not materialize. Several individuals expressed interest in participating in a focus group but

because of the proposed schedule could not make a commitment. Because of this turn of events,

I randomly selected four individuals to review the survey data and provide feedback. The

selection of these individuals was for their skills in data analysis and their involvement in and

understanding of the fire service.

Research participants and individuals who assisted in the data analysis received copies of

the survey results, excluding the open comment fields, as well as a copy of the original survey.

They provided a written summation of their interpretation of the data. In addition, I kept a

detailed journal of the conversation. Some respondents requested a copy of the survey results.

The provided information did not contain any information that would identify the participants. I

sent the same information to the professional organizations that had assisted in distributing the

survey invitation. The data included an invitation to discuss the results. I was hoping this gesture

would encourage others to become involved in a discussion of the survey results, which did not

come to fruition.

During the data analysis, the strategy of interpretive questions assisted in sifting through

the data collected and identifying recurring themes. This method proved reliable, as it allowed

the participants to understand the context of the survey questions. It also assisted the participants

in relating the information to their own organization (Stringer, 1999). These methods allowed for

efficient comparison and contrast of the survey data and the academic research. The application

of these strategies in an epistemological manner has reflected positively in the gathered data.

CHAPTER FOUR - RESEARCH STUDY RESULTS

On-Line Survey Study Findings of Members of the Fire Service

& Result of Panel of Fire Service Professionals

Who Reviewed the Survey Results

This inquiry sought to sample the opinions of firefighters to determine the ideal leadership competencies a fire officer should possess. In British Columbia, approximately 14,000 firefighters in 400 fire departments are spread around the province. The use of an electronic survey was the most efficient way to reach this large population. An invitation was sent via email to all of the organizations that represent firefighters. Through the nature of email and the World Wide Web, the invitation to participate traveled across Canada and around the world. Several responses came from the United States, Australia, New Zealand, and Great Britain.

In addition to the survey, I had a panel of professionals that included representatives of the fire service and people with an analysis background to review the survey data and provide feedback. This panel was chosen based on their years of service in the fire service profession, human resource management, and data analysis expertise. The panel members were provided with a copy of the survey questions and corresponding results and were asked to identify any themes, trends, or anomalies that they observed from the data. The feedback was informal and consisted of emails, conversation, and notes in point form. The comments of the panel members, and those of the survey respondents, are introduced with the phrase "a participant commented" or similar wording.

The ultimate goal of this inquiry was to determine the preferred leadership competencies for leaders in the fire service and ways to enhance existing leadership development to achieve

these competencies. This chapter contains conclusions drawn by the researcher using the survey

data, the data collected from the panel of professionals who reviewed the survey results, and the

interlinking of the data with the supporting literature. By using all three sources, I have honoured

Patton's (2002) criteria for rigorous methods to ensure the credibility of the findings,

conclusions, and recommendations. A list of recommendations that builds on the conclusions is

also included.

The collected data represent all facets of the fire service including all ranks, service

delivery models, and operational formats. In other words, the data are not dominated by one

particular sector. The information appears balanced in both statistical and non-statistical data.

The data do not reflect geographical preferences. In fact, the data support that the issue of

leadership has no boundaries, and the preferred competencies are the same for British Columbia

as they are throughout the world.

The survey comprised 45 leadership competencies grouped into five themes. The survey

results are presented by the emerging themes. The definition of "theme" as it relates to this

project is a recurring concept found within the data. The data allow the themes to be presented

on an individual basis; however, they all weave together to illustrate their symbiotic effect on the

organization. The major findings of this study were grouped into five themes:

- Theme One: Communications

- Theme Two: Workplace Environment

- Theme Three: Organizational Development

- Theme Four: Human Resource Development

- Theme Five: Conflict Resolution.

The survey presented the competencies in two main sections. In the first, participants

were asked to rate these competencies on a 5-point scale in order of importance to them. The second section asked the participants to rate their performance against that of their supervisor. The optimum way to discuss the results is to look at them within the individual themes and then link them together to discuss recommendations that arise from the entire project.

The second section of the survey generated valuable discussion; as one participant commented, typically employees tend to rate themselves as very close to or with better skills than those of their supervisors. The individual, now the situational leader, described the benefit of having hindsight and of being both employee and leader; she said that with her current knowledge, she may have rated her skills against those of her supervisor differently. For me as the researcher, this comment placed all the question responses into a perspective that I had not anticipated. I found myself asking, why would employees rate themselves higher? and as a leader, how could I engage them in order to reduce this disparity, if it exists? As I reviewed the results, I focused not only on the specifics of the questions and answers, but also on what other strategies a leader could employ to improve the situation.

Study Participants

The survey asked the participants several biographical questions to allow for better understanding of their background and of the part of the fire service they represented. Overall, the responses were balanced among the various ranks in the fire service and the different types of delivery models. The responses were higher from those who indicated they were career members, at 66.7%, than those of all-volunteer or paid-on-call, at 33.3%. This specific question had a category of "Other," where most respondents entered their status as volunteer or paid-on-call. The survey did not determine the reason for this result; an assumption is that not all volunteers or paid-on-call received the survey or felt that is was necessary to participate.

35. Tell Us about Yourself		
	Response Percent	Response Total
Career Member	66.7%	88
Paid-On-Call	5.3%	7
Volunteer	13.6%	18
Other	14.4%	19
What Best Describes Your Main Duties?		
Fire Suppression	33.3%	44
Fire Prevention	9.8%	13
Public Education	1.5%	2
Training	9.8%	13
Administration	31.1%	41
Other	14.4%	19
What Best Describes Your Position?		
Fire Chief	25%	33
Deputy Fire Chief	6.1%	8
Assistant Fire Chief	10.6%	14
Battalion Fire Chief	0.8%	1
Captain	10.6%	14
Lieutenant	5.3%	7
Fire Prevention Officer	4.5%	6
Fire Fighter	13.6%	18
Other	23.5%	31

The participants consisted of 42% senior officers, battalion chiefs, or higher, 16% junior officers comprising captains and lieutenants, and 42% firefighters. The participants reported that 77.3% operate in some form of supervisory capacity. These numbers represent the rank structure within the fire service, with the chief officers as the tops, captains and lieutenants as the middles, and firefighters as the bottoms (Oshry, 1996).

Study Findings

The research findings support the following themes:

Theme One: Communications

The importance of communications identifies itself through the results within its own section of the survey, and weaves through all the other theme areas. In fact, there is enough material for an entire project to examine communications within the fire service. In the scope of this project, communications covers everything from active listening to effective writing skills, and includes the ability to provide clear instructions and to convey the mission, vision, and values of the organization.

1. COMMUNICATIONS	Not Important at All	Slightly Important	Important	Very Important	Extremely Important
Demonstrates Active Listening Skills	1% (1)	0% (0)	6% (10)	**49% (75)**	44% (68)
Communicates in a clear and precise manner	1% (1)	0% (0)	3% (4)	40% (62)	**56% (87)**
Provides clear instructions and directions when giving assignments	1% (1)	0% (0)	1% (2)	38% (59)	**60% (92)**
Demonstrates effective written communications	1% (1)	5% (7)	22% (34)	**49% (76)**	23% (36)
Able to communicate the organization's mission, vision, and values	1% (2)	3% (4)	21% (32)	**38% (58)**	**38% (58)**
					Total Respondents 154

Within the realm of the fire service, the interpretation of the question is the same whether an emergency or non-emergency situation. The survey results show that 38% consider this competency as Very Important and 60% as Extremely Important. All the participants agreed on the importance, yet it continually surfaces as an area needing improvement. In Gary Filmon's (2003) report to the BC government on the 2003 wildfires, communications is a major area for improvement. The response from the Office of the Fire Commissioner for British Columbia (2003) to the Filmon report identified improving communications five times in the 43

recommendations.

Effective communications are necessary for the fire service to deal with other agencies, the media, and the public (Filmon, 2003). Filmon referred to specific systems to facilitate the smooth flow of information, such as common radio frequencies and the implementation of the British Columbia Emergency Response Management System, known as BCERMS, and the Incident Command System, known as ICS. These systems are comprehensive organization models to ensure that the efforts of all agencies are coordinated and organized. The systems provide a visual reference for the specific reporting relationships, the span of control, and the duties of each position.

The intent of the ICS and BCERMS models is application in a command-and-control function. Control of the information and communications is critical during an emergency or serious event. The fire service trains in the use of these models to ensure efficient operations during emergencies. When leaders employ the ICS model as a leadership or management model for day-to-day operations, the effectiveness of the leader deteriorates. By design, the ICS model creates a Marxist-like atmosphere in which those in charge control the information to maintain their positional power (Stringer, 1999). One of the comments in the survey responses indicated that leaders in the fire service who have not had leadership training rely on an ICS style of leadership. The participant's observations reflect the leader's comfort level with interpersonal communications. The leader relies on a rigid system of communication instead of employing other strategies when interacting with individuals.

When participants rated their skills against those of their supervisors in the area of interpersonal communications, 45% thought that their supervisors were Very Competent and 16% that they were Extremely Competent. Yet 33% rated their supervisors in the lower

categories of Not Competent, Slightly Competent, and Competent. A participant commented that leaders without adequate leadership development lacked the interpersonal skills and the human relations aspect of communicating with their reports. This finding highlights the reliance on command-and-control models of leadership in non-emergency situations.

6. COMMUNICATION Understands the basic behavioural skills of effective interpersonal communications. Listens actively and sincerely when being questioned						
	1: Not Competent	**2: Slightly Competent**	**3: Competent**	**4: Very Competent**	**5: Extremely Competent**	**X: Unable to Assess**
My Skill Level	0% (0)	0% (0)	26% (35)	**59% (81)**	15% (20)	1% (1)
My Supervisor's Skill Level	3% (4)	8% (11)	22% (30)	**45% (61)**	16% (22)	7% (9)
						Total Respondents: 137

In the survey, participants were asked to rate the importance of written communications. The results were 23% Extremely Important, 49% Very Important, 22% Important, and 5% Slightly Important, with only 1% stating that written communications were Not Important. The answers are not startling considering the importance of good written communications and the quantity that the fire service requires. When the participants compared their skill with that of their supervisors, the results clearly show that written communications is an area of concern. Question 9 inquired about the appropriate use of wording in both speaking and writing. The results indicated that 58% felt that their supervisors were Very or Extremely Competent compared to their self-rating of 65% in the same categories. The results also indicated that 11% of supervisors were Not Competent or Slightly Competent in this area compared with the self-evaluation of 4% in the category of Slightly Competent.

9. Uses appropriate wording when speaking and communicates effectively in writing						
	1: Not Competent	**2: Slightly Competent**	**3: Competent**	**4: Very Competent**	**5: Extremely Competent**	**X: Unable to Assess**

My Skill Level	0% (0)	4% (5)	30% (41)	**44% (60)**	21% (29)	1% (2)
My Supervisor's Skill Level	3% (4)	8% (11)	26% (35)	**37% (51)**	20% (28)	6% (8)
						Total Respondents: 137

The comments from the participants reflect the importance of both written and spoken communications in the workplace. For the fire service, they also address the difference of communications during an emergency incident from communications during day-to-day routine operations. Effective communication influences the workplace environment, maintains rapport with all members, and assists in the efficient application of policy and procedures. Communication is the medium that connects with the other identified themes, when individuals are operating within their role of leader.

Theme Two: Workplace Environment

The workplace environment is important in any organization. Choosing a career in the fire service is like choosing a lifestyle. Blaney's (2003) description of firefighters included a sense of community and purpose that evolves as they put the needs of others above their own needs. It becomes honourable to risk individual safety and be in a position of great danger (Parker, 1987). These factors contribute to the culture of the organization and have a direct relationship on the workplace environment.

The responses all indicated high percentages in the categories of Very Important and Extremely Important. Those categories that rated lower had responses from 1% to 3%. When participants rated their performance against that of their supervisors, the results indicated that a large percentage feel their supervisor is weak in these areas of leadership.

2. Workplace Environment					
	Not Important at All	Slightly Important	Important	Very Important	Extremely Important

Establishes rapport easily and is approachable	1% (1)	3% (4)	21% (32)	**50% (77)**	26% (40)
Applies policy and procedures consistently	1% (1)	0% (0)	15% (23)	**51% (78)**	34% (52)
Encourages and maintains a positive work environment	1% (1)	0% (0)	12% (18)	**51% (79)**	36% (56)
Respects diversity in the workplace	1% (1)	1% (2)	24% (37)	**44% (68)**	30% (46)
Able to give helpful and constructive performance evaluations	1% (1)	1% (2)	23% (35)	**48% (74)**	27% (42)
Actively expresses care and concern about the welfare of others	1% (1)	5% (7)	20% (31)	**40% (62)**	34% (53)
Creates and ensures an environment that is free of discrimination and harassment	1% (1)	1% (2)	21% (32)	32% (50)	**45% (69)**
					Total Respondents 154

Question 12 indicated that 13% of participants view supervisors as Slightly Competent in their ability in the category *Encourages and maintains a positive work environment*. Question 13 shows 11% rated supervisors as Slightly Competent on the statement *Applies policies and procedures consistently*. These numbers are really quite low when you consider that for Question 12, 29% rated their supervisor as Very Competent or better, and Question 13 had 34% indicating Very Competent or higher.

12. Encourages and maintains a positive work environment						
	1: Not Competent	**2: Slightly Competent**	**3: Competent**	**4: Very Competent**	**5: Extremely Competent**	**X: Unable to Assess**
My Skill Level	1% (1)	1% (1)	24% (33)	**48% (66)**	25% (34)	1% (2)
My Supervisor's Skill Level	5% (7)	13% (18)	24% (33)	**29% (40)**	23% (32)	5% (7)
						Total Respondents: 137

Several comments arose regarding how a manager interacts with his/her staff. A major factor is how the leader builds trust across the organization. One style is to micro-manage

employees and not have faith in them to do their job. The tendency to micro-manage staff

evolves from the leader's lack of training as a situational leader. The use of a command-and-

control management system shifts from use strictly at an incident to one that appears in the

leader's style of day-to-day operations. Just as communication influences this style, an

atmosphere that perpetuates a level of distrust in employees by the leader, or a perception of the

leader's need to control all actions of subordinates. In the survey, trust and trustworthiness

appeared several times as preferred competencies that firefighters want to see in their leaders.

An underlying theme of servant leadership appeared in the survey responses. Along with

trust, the participants described a relationship in which the leader puts value in them as an

individual. It is important the employees feel that they come first or are at least high on the

priority list of the organization. A specific suggestion is that the manager knows his/her

subordinates on a personal level that includes families and specific factors that may influence

performance in the workplace. The respondent's comments indicate that the leader should take

the opportunity to engage the staff, "listen with an open mind, and consider all information in an

unbiased manner prior to making decisions." Clearly, the execution of these skills is similar to

those skills identified in communication. The theme is that when the leader is practicing these

skills, there is a positive contribution to the workplace environment.

The workplace environment includes not only the non-physical but also the physical

elements in which individuals function. In the fire service, this environment may be for extended

periods of low intensity, short periods of high intensity, or a combination of both circumstances.

The survey's focus is on factors that leaders have control over in relation to their subordinates.

However, the comment from one participant that good leaders empower their staff so that they

are "innovative and give them the proper tools to do the job" speaks to both these factors. The

leaders have more control over the climate of the workplace by the style that they employ.

Control of the physical environment might be more difficult, as aspects like area of operation

and cost of equipment may be out of the leader's immediate control. How the leader deals with

these circumstances impacts the work environment. As a participant suggested, simply

acknowledging or showing empathy is a skill that a leader can employ to have a positive

influence on the situation.

Theme Three: Organizational Development

The questions relating to this theme focuses on the participants' opinions on planning and

organizational development. In this section, the results shifted from the majority of answers in

the categories of Very Important and Extremely Important, to include a larger response in the

categories of Important and Slightly Important. This response shift raises questions about the

significance and understanding of planning and organizational development as they relate to the

fire service.

The disparity of significance and understanding is noted in a comment by one of the

participants. For the statement *Conducts, implements, and evaluates strategic planning*, 50%

gave a rating of Very Important. The next question, *Influences people to follow the mission

statement, the vision statement, and the principles and practices*, 38% rated as Very Important

and 30% as Important. The participant who made the key comment questioned if individuals

truly understood the statement, as in his opinion, the strategic plan generates the mission and

vision statements. If individuals place a high degree of importance on the strategic plan, then the

importance of the plan should carry over to the other supporting statements. The data does not

reflect the congruence between the two.

The data also indicates that the level of importance drops for the following statements:

- Gathers relevant facts before initiating change—14% Important

- Identifies and prepares goals to meet future challenges—24% Important

- Plans and implements community-based initiatives—39% Important and 12%

  Slightly Important.

3. PLANNING AND ORGANIZATIONAL DEVELOPMENT					
	Not Important at All	**Slightly Important**	**Importa nt**	**Very Important**	**Extremely Important**
Gathers relevant facts before initiating change	1% (1)	0% (0)	14% (21)	**49% (76)**	36% (56)
Identifies and prepares goals to meet future challenges	1% (1)	2% (3)	24% (37)	**51% (78)**	23% (35)
Plans and implements community-based initiatives	1% (2)	12% (18)	**39% (60)**	**39% (60)**	9% (14)
Sets goals and action plans	1% (1)	5% (7)	26% (40)	**44% (67)**	25% (39)
Shows concern about quality standards	1% (1)	0% (0)	18% (28)	**53% (81)**	29% (44)
Conducts, implements, and evaluates strategic planning	1% (1)	6% (10)	24% (37)	**50% (77)**	19% (29)
Influences people to follow the mission statement, the vision statement, and the principles and practices	3% (5)	6% (10)	30% (46)	**38% (58)**	23% (35)
Organizes time and tasks efficiently	1% (1)	1% (2)	30% (46)	**45% (69)**	23% (36)
Understands, encourages, and uses technology effectively	1% (1)	3% (5)	34% (53)	**45% (69)**	17% (26)
Handles current financial and human resources effectively	1% (1)	2% (3)	19% (30)	**50% (77)**	28% (43)
				Total Respondents: 154	

On the surface, these results may look acceptable, although a review of the full survey

reveals an overall tendency for the answers to be grouped in the higher categories. The shift to

the lower categories in this section of the survey may indicate other factors that the survey has

not considered or that have not arisen in the participants' feedback.

In contrast to these results, the majority of participants for the entire survey rated their

performance as Very Competent and their supervisors' performance in the lower category of

Competent. For Question 16, 50% of the participants indicated that their performance on

Gathers relevant facts before initiating change was Very Competent, and 36% stated that their

supervisors shared this rating, while 26% considered their supervisors to be Competent.

16. Planning and Organizational Development: Gathers relevant facts before initiating change						
	1: Not Competent	**2: Slightly Competent**	**3: Competent**	**4: Very Competent**	**5: Extremely Competent**	**X: Unable to Assess**
My Skill Level	0% (0)	2% (3)	25% (34)	**50% (69)**	19% (26)	4% (6)
My Supervisor's Skill Level	6% (8)	8% (11)	26% (35)	**36% (49)**	17% (23)	9% (12)
						Total Respondents: 137

The area of community-based initiatives also supplied lower ratings of importance and

skills for both the participant and the supervisor. As a researcher, I find this outcome surprising,

as many programs in the fire service are community based. A participant commented that the

leader must understand the needs of the community. The results were 39% for both Important

and Very Important, with 12% at Slightly Important. The skill level was also lower, with the

largest group of participants, 41%, indicating that they are Competent, as are their supervisors, at

29%. The results generally indicated that community-based initiatives are important, and the

individuals developing and implementing these programs do so with a competent level of skill.

The results are still lower in comparison with the results from the other questions in the same

theme.

18. Plans and implements community-based initiatives						
	1: Not Competent	**2: Slightly Competent**	**3: Competent**	**4: Very Competent**	**5: Extremely Competent**	**X: Unable to Assess**
My Skill Level	1% (1)	8% (11)	**41% (56)**	27% (37)	11% (15)	12% (17)
My Supervisor's	5% (7)	12% (17)	**29% (40)**	25% (34)	14% (19)	15% (20)

Skill Level						
						Total Respondents: 137

Some of the feedback comments contradicted the low ratings in the responses for this theme. Quite a few participants indicated that the leader must understand the core values of the individual, as well as those of the organization. These values should be clearly stated and should result from a thorough strategic planning process.

Theme Four: Human Resource Development

The area of human resource development generated several comments from the participants. The survey also contained a section to collect biographical data on the participants. Survey question 4 looked at the role of the leader as he/she interacts with staff and includes information on motivation, team building, and employee development.

4. HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT					
	Not Important at All	**Slightly Important**	**Important**	**Very Important**	**Extremely Important**
Enhances team morale and motivation	1% (1)	0% (0)	8% (13)	**52% (80)**	39% (60)
Able to take ownership of mistakes	1% (1)	1% (1)	11% (17)	32% (50)	**55% (85)**
Demonstrates flexibility by adjusting readily to change in the work environment	1% (1)	1% (1)	21% (33)	**47% (72)**	31% (47)
Establishes the right balance between career and family	1% (1)	3% (5)	23% (35)	**40% (62)**	33% (51)
Works well under stress	1% (1)	1% (1)	10% (16)	42% (64)	**47% (72)**
Learns continuously by seeking knowledge, skills, and experience	1% (1)	0% (0)	16% (24)	**51% (79)**	32% (50)
Encourages mentoring opportunities	1% (2)	1% (2)	29% (44)	**51% (78)**	18% (28)
Identifies employee training needs	1% (1)	1% (1)	26% (40)	**53% (81)**	20% (31)
Develops a team and maximizes its performance	1% (1)	1% (2)	14% (21)	**49% (76)**	35% (54)
Recognizes and rewards positive performance	1% (1)	2% (3)	23% (36)	**44% (67)**	31% (47)

Ensures a meaningful performance evaluation process takes place	1% (1)	4% (6)	31% (48)	**47% (72)**	18% (27)
Addresses below-standard performance so that improvement occurs	1% (1)	1% (1)	23% (35)	**51% (79)**	25% (38)
Approaches mistakes as learning opportunities	1% (1)	2% (3)	22% (34)	**51% (79)**	24% (37)
Coaches, guides, and offers advice without assuming control	1% (1)	1% (2)	24% (37)	**47% (73)**	27% (41)
Counsels, mentors, or coaches others toward performance improvement	1% (1)	1% (2)	21% (33)	**53% (82)**	23% (36)
Stimulates and supports creativity and innovation in others	1% (1)	3% (5)	29% (45)	**45% (69)**	22% (34)
Encourages contribution and participation by all members of the team	1% (1)	1% (2)	20% (31)	**45% (70)**	32% (50)
				Total Respondents: 154	

The response to the statement *Identifies employee training needs* was 26% Important, 53% Very Important, and 20% Extremely Important. There is the possibility that the interpretation of the definition of training needs was different among the survey participants. In the fire service, training is extensively used to describe everything from maintaining skills for routine tasks, to preparing candidates for leadership roles. In evaluating their supervisors, 34% of survey participants viewed them as Very Competent. In comparison, participants assessed their own skills as predominantly higher, with 50% giving a rating of Very Competent.

25. Identifies employee training needs						
	1: Not Competent	**2: Slightly Competent**	**3: Competent**	**4: Very Competent**	**5: Extremely Competent**	**X: Unable to Assess**
My Skill Level	0% (0)	3% (4)	28% (38)	**50% (68)**	16% (22)	4% (6)
My Supervisor's Skill Level	6% (8)	12% (17)	28% (39)	**34% (47)**	9% (13)	9% (13)
					Total Respondents: 137	

The survey also gave participants the opportunity to record their highest level of

education completed. The largest response, 25.8%, have completed some post-secondary, 18.2%

have completed an undergraduate degree, and 17.4% a 2-year certificate program. The surprising

result is that 63.6% are not pursuing an education program of any type. One of the participants

queried that if that high a number of people were not engaging in education programs, were they

remaining dormant in their position, and how can they keep current with technology and other

advancements in the industry.

41. What Level of Education Have You Completed?		
	Response Percent	Response Total
Did not complete High School	2.3%	3
High School Diploma	13.6%	18
Some Post-Secondary	25.8%	34
Certificate	12.1%	16
2-Year Diploma	17.4%	23
Undergraduate Degree	18.2%	24
Graduate Degree	10.6%	14
42. Are You Currently Enrolled in an Education Program?		
No	63.6%	84
Yes, College Certificate	8.3%	11
Yes, 2-Year Diploma	5.3%	7
Yes, Undergraduate Degree	3%	4
Yes, Graduate Degree	8.3%	11
Other	11.4%	15

Another observation made was that current leaders in the fire service have little post-

secondary education compared with leaders in other industries. The participant thought that, in

his experience, those employees with higher education intimidated leaders with a lower level of

education. This lack of education also led to the leader's misunderstanding of organizational

behaviour, leadership, and problem-solving processes. The survey did not ask participants about

their specific educational backgrounds, so the data does not directly link to this statement. The

comments from other participants indicated that an effective leader creates learning opportunities

to build up his/her staff. I am inferring that the leader would also take advantage of these

opportunities to build on his/her skills and expertise.

Theme Five: Conflict Resolution

The survey data indicates that problem solving and conflict resolution are very important

to members of the fire service, and also that supervisors' performance did not meet the

participants' expectations.

5. PROBLEM SOLVING AND CONFLICT RESOLUTION					
	Not Important at All	Slightly Important	Important	Very Important	Extremely Important
Makes difficult decisions in a timely manner	1% (1)	0% (0)	14% (22)	**45% (69)**	40% (62)
Encourages a willingness to work on difficult problems	1% (1)	0% (0)	19% (30)	**53% (81)**	27% (42)
Addresses the source, not just the symptom, of problems	1% (1)	0% (0)	14% (21)	38% (59)	**47% (73)**
Resolves problems using consultation and consensus, when appropriate	1% (1)	2% (3)	25% (38)	**51% (79)**	21% (33)
Addresses and prevents workplace conflicts	1% (1)	1% (1)	24% (37)	**51% (78)**	24% (37)
Anticipates and manages problems effectively	1% (1)	1% (2)	21% (32)	**51% (79)**	26% (40)
					Total Respondents: 154

The survey participants ranked the competency of addressing and preventing workplace

conflict as 24% Important, 51% Very Important, and 24% Extremely Important. Yet the

participants indicated that their own performance is Competent at 42% and their supervisor is

Very Competent at 35%. These figures are low when compared with the answers to other

questions. In this case, 9% of participants rated their supervisors as Not Competent, 12% as

Slightly Competent, and 27% as Very Competent. Overall in this area, both the participants and

their supervisors are performing at an average to below-average level.

31. Addresses and prevents workplace conflicts						
	1: Not Competent	**2: Slightly Competent**	**3: Competent**	**4: Very Competent**	**5: Extremely Competent**	**X: Unable to Assess**
My Skill Level	0% (0)	5% (7)	**42% (58)**	37% (51)	13% (18)	3% (4)
My Supervisor's Skill Level	9% (12)	12% (17)	27% (37)	**35% (48)**	10% (14)	7% (10)
						Total Respondents: 137

The poor performance is in balance shared between both the participants and their

supervisors. On the statement *Anticipates and manages problems effectively*, 39% of the

participants viewed themselves as Competent and their supervisors as 7% Not Competent, 9%

Slightly Competent, and 29% Competent. The use of consultation and consensus, when

appropriate, rated at 47% Very Competent for the participants and 38% for their supervisors in

the same category. The ratings of the supervisors were 5% Not Competent, 13% Slightly

Competent, and 21% Competent. Only 16% of the supervisors received the Extremely

Competent rating.

32. Anticipates and manages problems effectively						
	1: Not Competent	**2: Slightly Competent**	**3: Competent**	**4: Very Competent**	**5: Extremely Competent**	**X: Unable to Assess**
My Skill Level	0% (0)	5% (7)	39% (53)	**46% (63)**	9% (13)	1% (1)
My Supervisor's Skill Level	7% (10)	9% (12)	29% (40)	**36% (50)**	12% (16)	7% (9)
						Total Respondents: 137

These lower ratings indicated that the staff wished to become part of the solution process.

They rated their skill as 1% Slightly Competent, 31% Competent, and 18% Extremely

Competent. One of the participants, currently a manager, commented that she does not always

have time to consult staff on items of concern, so a lack of time may be an issue. The respondent

continued to validate her leadership style with the comments that as the leader, she sees the

entire picture of the organization and has a specific leadership style and also specific goals that

employees may not share. As long as the manager is working toward the perceived best interest

of the organization, this Machiavellian approach to leadership is justified. The comments and the

data indicate that the individuals would respond better to a different leadership style.

30. Resolves problems using consultation and consensus, when appropriate						
	1: Not Competent	**2: Slightly Competent**	**3: Competent**	**4: Very Competent**	**5: Extremely Competent**	**X: Unable to Assess**
My Skill Level	0% (0)	1% (2)	31% (43)	**47% (65)**	18% (25)	1% (2)
My Supervisor's Skill Level	5% (7)	13% (18)	21% (29)	**38% (52)**	16% (22)	7% (9)
						Total Respondents: 137

The survey results also shed light on the health of the organization in how staff perceive

the leader's ability to address difficult problems. This competency was rated as 53% Very

Important and 27% Extremely Important. Yet the skill level is lower, with the majority of

participants, 48%, indicating Very Competent and 20% Extremely Competent. The ratings of the

supervisors were slightly lower, at 24% Competent and 40% Very Competent. Lower ratings of

4% Not Competent and 9% Slightly Competent also surfaced in the data. The comments

indicated a view of leaders being reluctant to deal with difficult problems in the workplace.

29. Encourages a willingness to work on difficult problems						
	1: Not Competent	**2: Slightly Competent**	**3: Competent**	**4: Very Competent**	**5: Extremely Competent**	**X: Unable to Assess**
My Skill Level	0% (0)	3% (4)	28% (38)	**48% (66)**	20% (28)	1% (1)
My Supervisor's Skill Level	4% (6)	7% (9)	24% (33)	**40% (55)**	20% (27)	5% (7)
						Total Respondents: 137

Theme Summary

The title of this electronic survey is "A Survey of Leadership Skills and Competencies."

The title frames the questions in the context that, as a researcher, I wanted to know and

understand what individuals perceived were the competencies that make for good leaders. In this chapter, I have broken the results into five distinct themes, but it is important to understand that these themes are not the only factors that exist in an organization. In addition, the themes do not necessarily stand alone; they weave together, illustrating their symbiotic effect on the organization. For example, good or poor communications will directly affect the workplace environment. To vary this environment, one may consider modifying the leader's style. Modification may include an intervention with the leader's written communications. This action is in fact applying leverage in the area of human resources to improve communications, which in turn will affect the workplace environment. One does not exist without the other.

Study Conclusions

The data generated by the survey and the participants' comments reflect a general need for a formal process to develop current and future organizational leaders. The current process of promotion is not adequately preparing leaders for their roles. The issues facing the organization are complex and require a level of competency that is not occurring through the current development process.

Currently, individuals reach leadership positions through a promotional process based on seniority or popularity. Richardson (2003) suggested that a system that allows the culture to initiate the change would have more success than a process that forces the change onto the culture. The data supports this initiative, and ultimately a higher success rate is likely if the culture drives the change. The data and comments also indicate that in order to begin this cultural shift, members of the organization require more formal education than what organizations are currently offering. The data also indicate the members' willingness to engage the organization and to feel that they have an influence over their destiny long before they are

eligible for promotion.

<div align="center">*Summary of Major Conclusions*</div>

- Conclusion One: The study results indicate that more communications training is necessary for members of the fire service at all organizational levels.

- Conclusion Two: The data clearly indicated a preference for a workplace that sustains the various systems at the individual level.

- Conclusion Three: The organization must continue to evolve and develop in order to remain current and on the leading edge of the industry.

- Conclusion Four: The responsibility to prepare individuals for future leadership roles lies both with the individual and with the organization.

- Conclusion Five: The future leaders of the fire service require skills in conflict resolution to skilfully take advantage of threats and make them opportunities for the organization.

Conclusion One: Improving Communication Skills

The study results indicate that more communications training is necessary for members of the fire service at all organizational levels. The success of a leader's effectiveness is directly related to how he/she communicates with those within his/her span of control. The inability to communicate effectively via many mediums seriously hampers the efficiency of an organization.

The importance of communication skills begins with operational events such as major emergencies. This fact was demonstrated during the 2003 wildfires in BC (Filmon, 2003). Filmon referred to specific systems that range from the physical, taking the form of equipment requirements, to the non-physical, which includes specific organizational structures. As support for this finding, the Office of the Fire Commissioner for British Columbia (2003) is sponsoring

many individuals within the fire service to receive ICS or Incident Command System training. When firefighters are training and working at emergencies of all sizes, the communication structure usually follows a format based on the ICS system. The fact that during the 2003 wildfires multiple fire departments came together but could not adequately communicate with each other indicates the need for more training.

This situation also indicates the need for more development at the individual level. Comments from the survey indicated that some leaders operate continually on an ICS format. This command-and-control style is not conducive to creating strong work environments, and perhaps the leader is not very skilful at ICS. This conclusion is supported in Filmon's (2003) observations.

Moving away from a command-and-control leadership style requires excellent interpersonal skills, of which communications is a major factor. Kouzes and Posner (1995) emphasized that the leader must be efficient in face-to-face communications. The ability to "paraphrase, summarize, express feelings, disclose personal information" (p. 142) is essential. The personnel in the leader's control not only need to understand their leader's instruction, but need to understand the leader. During an emergency there is not enough time to develop this relationship; therefore, if a relationship is developed prior to an occurrence, a greater improvement in operational effectiveness is likely.

The fire service is slow to move from this command-and-control style. Brunacini (1996) introduced a concept of a flat organizational structure that is customer centered. The intent is to empower the firefighters to better deal with the end user of the emergency system, but a significant spin-off is the improved communications within the organization. For the program to be effective, the entire organization must exhibit excellent skills in verbal and written

communications. Brunacini's organizational structure is vastly different than the one promoted by ICS, but illustrates that a paramilitary organization can operate effectively outside the traditional structure.

The data also indicate the importance of written communications within the fire service. Leaders are required to write reports, operational policies, and other documents such as strategic plans. Without effective skills in this area, the message of the organization becomes lost in the medium. Consider the transmission of the vision the leader has of the organization or a specific aspect of it. Constituents are not mind readers, and unless the leader can adequately describe the vision verbally and in writing, the intent will not transfer.

Consider the example from Kouzes and Posner (1995) in which the leader has a vision that he/she sees as an apple: "By the time it gets to middle management it is an orange, and when it gets to us it is a lemon" (p. 119).

The data on communication skills look more at the individual transmitting the message and his/her ability to communicate in a variety of mediums. The data do not specifically address the comprehension skills of the individual receiving the messages; however, the results clearly indicate the importance of listening skills. For the individual, effective listening skills allow for an authentic understanding of the message (Covey, 1989).

Conclusion Two: Improving the Workplace Environment

The data clearly indicated a preference for a workplace that sustains the various systems at the individual level. The workplace becomes a holistic centre that has balance between personal and organizational needs, and between the physical and the cerebral.

To understand how to achieve a virtuous workplace, consider the work of Abraham Maslow (as cited in Gwynne, 1997) and his Hierarchy of Needs theory. Maslow theorized that

people are motivated by unsatisfied needs, and that it is necessary to satisfy the lower needs

before moving up the scale to fulfill the higher needs. Maslow's general needs, listed from least

to most important, are physiological needs, safety, love, esteem, and finally self-actualization.

In the fire service, Maslow's theory (as cited in Gwynne, 1997) applies to both the

organization and the individual. One may wonder how these needs apply to an organization.

Consider that the organization is made up of many systems and many components, of which

human capital is one (Senge et al., 1999). In order for the systems and components to form

together and function cohesively, the entire individual needs require satisfaction before moving

on to the next level.

The application of a systematic approach, such as Maslow's, is key when an organization

is facing change or is in a period of transition. In order for the organization to succeed, satisfying

the needs of the employees is necessary. This action may seem trivial, yet it builds commitment

to the leader and ultimately the organization through participation and action (Senge et al.,

1999).

This approach is the same in the fire service during emergency and non-emergency

operations. During a response to an emergency, more controls are in place that may not allow for

total individual participation to problem solve or to collaborate on the best tactic to meet the

determined objectives. Yet if the leader has an inclusive and participatory style during non-

emergency times, meeting the individual's needs during an emergency when the leader does not

have the luxury of time will require minimal effort. The leader who builds trust and fosters

collaboration will have more credibility than the leader who does not (Kouzes & Posner, 1995).

Leaders must always consider the factors that they can influence to improve and maintain

a positive work environment. O'Toole (1995) described Einstein's pithy observation that "great

souls have always met with violent opposition from mediocre minds" (p. 165). This observation

is for leaders always to appreciate the value in their followers, and not to view employees as

merely a means to an end. Kouzes and Posner (1995) described this situation as the "paradox of

power" (p. 185), where leaders becomes most effective when they allow those in their span of

control the ability to determine and execute strategies in meeting the organizational goals.

Conclusion Three: Developing the Organization

The organization must continue to evolve and develop in order to remain current and on

the leading edge of the industry. The organizational culture of the fire service has evolved

through storytelling, imitation, and enforcement of the culture's distinct rules of conduct

(Hewitt, as cited in Richardson, 2003).

The fire service relies heavily on routines to govern behaviours such as daily tasks and

operational methods. The benefit of these engrained habits is that they allow the firefighter to

perform complicated tasks without thinking about every step in the process (Gasaway, 2003).

Breaking the process down into a routine allows the firefighter to master the skill, which in turn

leads to operational efficiency. Daily routines are also employed as a management control to

direct staff through the mundane but necessary chores of the organization.

The negative effect of routine tasks is that they take up valuable time and do not allow

for non-routine tasks. These tasks ultimately act against the possibility of change by limiting the

opportunities for creativity and experimentation (Kouzes & Posner, 1995). Identifying the

essential routines that allow for safe and efficient operation is essential as those routines that are

not essential are those that enable the organization to remain in atrophy (Kouzes & Posner,

1995).

The survey data clearly indicated a willingness of the respondents to be involved in the

organization. The research of Kouzes and Posner (1995) supports the claim that people believe that they can make a difference. Comments from the respondents indicated that an organization needs to engage its staff regularly to monitor performance and confirm the system relationships among the constituents. A participant remarked how that when his workplace connects with him, the work environment "works to promote credibility and trust at all levels of the organization. Simply having mission and vision statements is not sufficient if the organization is not meeting them."

An organization that continues to develop and evolve will also avoid the negative effects of organizational culture. O'Toole (1995) theorized that people in groups form fixed ideas and then conspire to protect these ideas at all costs. Keeping routines and not allowing for the cultivation, integration, or experimentation of new ideas support this process. The survey results indicated that, overall, leaders do not have a high level of mastery in developing an organization, in comparison with the other themes.

Conclusion Four: Developing Employees

The responsibility to prepare individuals for future leadership roles lies both with the individual and with the organization. To adequately prepare individuals requires deviation from the use of prescriptive performance standards and the reliance on most promotional procedures entrenched in collective agreements and organizational culture.

The survey participants indicated a preference for a high degree of skill and the importance of many competencies within the framework of human resources. Skills such as team building, ability to provide meaningful performance feedback, and lifelong learning were all rated as very important. However, these preferences are not adequately addressed in the prescriptive performance standards. The only avenues for an individual to gain exposure to and

develop these preferred competencies are either internal, through the culture of the organization, or external, through a process initiated by the individual.

It is highly doubtful that either of these avenues will be readily available to the individual. The culture of the fire service has evolved through storytelling, imitation, and enforcement of the culture's distinct rules of conduct (Hewitt, 1995, as cited in Richardson, 2003). This evolution reflects a preference for maintaining the status quo. Initiating change may be impossible if the culture is not receptive. The literature clearly indicated that the organizational culture is a major factor to consider when implementing change (Parker & Bradley, 2000).

To influence the organizational culture, the organization must enable the individual. Senge (1994) suggested the theory of team learning. In team learning, individuals come together and discover insights that are not available on the individual level. The leader is enabling the entire organization by educating the individuals.

A participant made the following comment:

It is my opinion that many of the leaders within the fire service have little or no post-secondary education. Unfortunately, many of these managers are intimidated by educated employees and do not have a good understanding of organizational behaviour, leadership skills, and problem-solving processes. I hope to see a shift in the fire service over the next 15-20 years to look at promoting educated leaders instead of basing promotions on seniority.

This comment highlights the importance of formal education for future leaders. Not only will the leader gain skills, but the more individuals within the organization who have formal education, the more leverage points will be available to influence the organizational culture. The

survey results indicated that the majority of participants have a limited amount of education past the high-school level and that over 63% are NOT pursuing further education. The skills necessary to successfully receive formal education include team building, critical thinking, problem solving, and networking. All skills were deemed important in the survey results, yet are not available in the current prescriptive models.

Formal education is only one example of an external method to expose individuals to alternative systems and information that they can integrate into their organization. From a logistics perspective, providing or expecting potential future leaders to achieve a formal education may be an unattainable goal. What is attainable is exposing individuals to many and varied experiences that allow for individual learning. The future that the fire service, and all organizations, face is one that will have significant change as a consequence of such factors as the retirement of the baby-boomer generation and technological advances. Through this uncertainty, in addition to all the new skills and attitudes necessary to meet these challenges, individuals must become effective learners (Vaill, 1996).

Conclusion Five: Resolving Conflict

The future leaders of the fire service require skills in conflict resolution to skillfully take advantage of threats and make them opportunities for the organization.

The survey results indicate that the competency of conflict resolution covers issues that arise on the individual level and also those that affect the organization. The preferred quality is a leader who can take these conflicts and solve them in such a way that they in turn work for the organization. Such a leader recognizes that differences or threats are not negative but are opportunities for the organization to grow and transform, capitalizing on these factors (Senge et al., 1999) for the organization.

The role of the leader is to foster collaboration and allow individuals to search for solutions to solve internal and external conflicts (Kouzes & Posner, 1995). The leader's desire to solve these conflicts directly creates more turmoil, as he/she is perceived to become a part of the conflict (Vaill, 1996). A survey participant described this situation as micro-management, stating that "people are happier when they feel that they have ownership of their work, and are trusted to solve the problem." Involvement of the leader in solving conflict should only occur if employees have reached an impasse and are unable to solve a problem. The leader must avoid the perception that he/she is micro-managing the employees.

Conflict resolution is also a situational leadership tool that allows the leader to put the entire situation into the context of how it relates to the individual and the organization. In his discussion of identifying systematic relationships within organizations, Oshry (1996) used the proverb "We see people not as they are, but as we are" and added, "And who we are is shaped by the context in which we exist." (p. 21) A survey participant observed that the leader must "listen with an open mind, and consider all information in an unbiased manner prior to making decisions." Seeing the situation in the correct context is necessary for a credible solution as viewed by all constituents.

Study Recommendations

The recommendations clearly reflect the need for fire service organizations to work in cooperation with individuals within their organization to ensure continuing development of current and future leaders. The following major recommendations are made to the Justice Institute, Fire and Safety Division, for their review and possible integration into new or existing educational programs. The recommendations are based on the survey results, the literature review, and the conclusions, integrating these domains.

Summary of Recommendations

- Recommendation One: Current and future leaders receive continuing education that develops their communication skills.

- Recommendation Two: Work toward the creation of a learning organization by creating learning individuals.

- Recommendation Three: Current and future leaders require education and training on how to foster collaboration within a work group.

- Recommendation Four: The research clearly indicated that understanding the organizational culture is critical for the application of leverage by which to introduce change.

Recommendation One: Current and Future Leaders Receive Continuing Education That Develops Their Communication Skills

The successful leader requires a high level of mastery in the sharing of knowledge and ideas. The earlier the competencies of effective communications skills are introduced in the individual's career, the more time the individual has to refine and achieve mastery. Leaders need to understand the many different strategies for communication:

- Education and training in operational communication models—in particular, ICS and BCERMS. The leader must be fluent in both, to thoroughly understand how best to apply them. There may be times when they are not appropriate and a modified version is more suited to the situation. The leader must be comfortable moving from one system to another to ensure the message is properly transmitted and received.

- Formal and informal education that develops effective writing skills. Individuals require the ability to write clear and concisely. Firefighters need to fill out technical

reports, prepare financial statements, business cases, and legal documents, and

perform human resource activities such as annual personnel reviews.

- A high level of verbal skill. Verbal skill is necessary to communicate actions during
  an emergency and to ensure effective daily operations. In the role of leader, the
  individual will come in contact with the public and will need different skills to
  communicate with those outside the industry. Competent performance in speaking
  effectively, doing public speaking, facilitating group discussions, reporting detailed
  information, and providing feedback to individuals requires a high level of
  knowledge and proficiency.

- Non-verbal skills. These are just as important in interpreting non-verbal messages
  from those in the leader's span of control and also from the public. Non-verbal skills
  include the development of effective listening techniques and skills on how to build
  rapport among other individuals.

- Efficient use of skills that facilitate interviewing, persuasion, negotiation, and
  investigation.

- The inclusion of reading and comprehension skills development.

Recommendation Two: Work Toward the Creation of a Learning Organization by

Creating Learning Individuals

This concept is relatively new to the fire service, and all constituents will require

education on and an introduction to what a learning organization is and how it would apply to

the fire service. Current and future leaders need to understand the effectiveness of this model and

how it positively influences the work environment. Leaders at all levels of the fire service will

require skills on how to introduce and integrate the concept of a learning organization into the

traditional fire service. The first step is implementation at the individual level.

This recommendation requires several strategies implemented concurrently to ensure successful implementation:

- Ensure formal education of current and future leaders in degree programs.

- Conduct formal and informal sessions that promote critical thinking among all the constituents.

- Offer education seminars on what a learning organization is and how to apply it in their organization.

- Expose individuals to a variety of planning processes, and create links back to their organization. Some strategies may include secondments or job sharing with other organizations.

Undertake a strategic planning process that allows for participation from all levels of the organization. The process should include the facilitation of shared vision and values. A workshop, or several workshops, would allow for further discovery into the shared values, while at the same time engaging the employees. This strategy should encourage buy-in from all levels.

The creating of a learning organization begins to blend all of the conclusions that the survey identified. The interlinking of the themes of workplace environment, organizational development, human resources, and conflict resolution become apparent in strategies that develop one competency while assisting in the development of the other.

Recommendation Three: Current and Future Leaders Require Education and Training on How to Foster Collaboration within a Work Group

Individuals often reach a leadership position through a process that places more weight on seniority or popularity. With this process comes the possibility that an individual may not be

adequately prepared. It can be a difficult transition from that of peer to leader. The fire service, being a paramilitary organization, will assign a rank to the work-group leader. For the most part, the troubles that arise are during non-emergency times when there is less control on the work group. Kouzes and Posner (1995) illustrated positional power when they cited a quotation from Major General John Stanford: "We don't get our power from our stars and our bars. We get our power from the people we lead" (p. 186).

Those leaders who rely on situational power will not be as effective as those who foster collaboration and empower those within their span of control.

For leaders to bestow this power to their reports, they will require a high level of skill and self-confidence to not feel threatened by the subordinates. The transfer of power will not happen if the leaders feel threatened.

Therefore, current and future leaders should receive training and education in the following areas:

- Understanding Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs theory with a practical application for the fire service.

- Empowering individuals within their span of control.

- Fostering collaboration and creating effective work groups.

- Understanding diversity and balance in the workplace.

- Creating an atmosphere that encourages exploration and experimentation, to foster new ideas.

Recommendation Four: The Research Clearly Indicated That Understanding the

Organizational Culture Is Critical for the Application of Leverage by Which to Introduce

Change

To influence the organizational culture, the organization must first enable the individual. The following strategies merit consideration:

- Facilitate a workshop so that all members can understand the organizational culture.

- Work toward the creation of an environment that allows for discussion of threats and opportunities that affect the individual and the organization.

- Ensure ongoing professional development of the individual and the work groups.

- Include programs that introduce change concepts, with examples of application within a traditional organization.

- Require formal education that includes university degrees or certificate programs that develop the individual's critical thinking skills.

- Establish secondments, mentoring, and job-shadowing programs.

We now move to chapter 5 where I propose a plan to implement the above recommendations.

CHAPTER FIVE – RESEARCH IMPLICATIONS

"If I were to wish for anything I should not wish for wealth and power,

but for the passionate sense of what can be."

Soren Kierkegaard (as cited in Zander & Zander, 2000, p. 113)

Organizational Implementation

The results of this research study have shown that educating and investing in

individuals can have the effect of:

- Improving individual and group communication skills.

- Creating an inclusive and healthy workplace.

- Creating individuals who embrace lifelong learning.

- Creating a learning organization.

What are ways the fire service can capitalize on these results to improve existing

workplaces and produce high-calibre leaders?

Recommendations for the Justice Institute of British Columbia

The Fire & Safety Division of the Justice Institute of British Columbia, as the main fire

education body in the province, has an opportunity to improve the calibre of current and future

fire officers. The programs offered by the Justice Institute have the potential to reach a large

number of current and future leaders from around the province. Integrating recommendations

and themes from this project will help ensure the concepts and knowledge will transfer to the

students, which they will then transfer to their organizations. The course material will reflect the

research data and integrate the identified concepts to allow the individuals to begin applying this new knowledge through experimentation and implementation. The net result is improved individuals, organizations, and communities. This outcome follows the mission of the Justice Institute of BC.

Implementation of the Recommendations

The four major recommendations arising from the project are:

Recommendation Number One: Current and future leaders receive continuing education that develops their communication skills.

Recommendation Number Two: Work toward the creation of learning organization by creating learning individuals.

Recommendation Number Three: Current and future leaders require education and training on how to foster collaboration within a work group.

Recommendation Number Four: The research clearly indicates that understanding the organizational culture is critical for the application of leverage by which to introduce change.

The nature of these recommendations is such that they can be implemented in many areas within the current curriculum of the fire officer program. Individual courses can have specific modifications, or these recommendations can be used as a benchmark in evaluating the entire program.

The first step will be to meet with the Program Coordinator for the Accreditation and Officer Programs. This meeting will allow for the explanation of the themes and data identified in the research project and begin a discussion on their specific application to current and future curricula.

The second step will be to form an advisory committee made up of faculty and

representatives of the fire service. The directive of this committee will be to develop specific

strategies to implement the recommendations into the existing curriculum, while at the same

time meeting the expectations of the governing and certification bodies. Specifically, the Justice

Institute maintains certification with the International Standardization Organization, or ISO, as

well as the International Fire Service Accreditation Congress, or IFSAC, and the National Board

on Fire Service Professional Qualifications, know as ProBoard Certification. In addition, the

Justice Institute must also satisfy the end users of its programs.

The third step will involve beta testing of the revised curriculum. Selecting students for

this beta test will be on a voluntary basis. The students will be advised that the curriculum that

they will be using is being considered for implementation into the current fire officer program.

To alleviate any concerns of the students, upon successful completion they will receive full

credit for the course toward the program certificate. The students will also be asked to fill out a

detailed questionnaire after the course and at a period some months afterward, so that the

advisory committee can determine the effects of the new material. Depending on the residential

locations of the students, this course may be in a classroom setting or offered via distance

education. The format may or may not allow for a focus group to occur, but one is strongly

recommended.

The fourth step will be a review by the advisory committee of the results of the beta

testing. The committee will determine implementation strategies for the new material into the

fire officer program based on these results and any feedback received from the certification

bodies and industry representatives.

There is the potential that there will be some reluctance to incorporate these results into

current programs, even with direction from representatives of the end user groups. Some of these

recommendations may be interpreted as a threat to the current organizational culture of the fire service. It is important to create a dialogue within the Justice Institute with current faculty and students and also within the fire service.

Achieving success will also require presentations to the end users and their industry organizations. Creating opportunities to meet on an individual basis with the larger fire departments and with the various groups will assist in disseminating the research findings. Groups such as the Fire Chiefs' Association of BC hold regional meetings regularly across the province, in addition to an annual convention. This is the same for the British Columbia Fire Training Officers Association, the Fire Prevention Officers Association of British Columbia, and the International Association of Fire Fighters. Informing and educating these groups, in addition to the leaders of the organization, will assist in creating buy-in from the fire service.

To successfully implement these recommendations and create this type of change, it is important that the Justice Institute take a proactive role in the implementation and integrating these concepts. Consider the work of O'Toole (1995) and the examples of values-based leadership, specifically O'Toole's description of the former US presidents sculpted on Mt. Rushmore. O'Toole described leaders who model the competencies of "courage, authenticity, integrity, vision, passion, conviction, and persistence" (p. 21) as Rushmorean. They are leaders who believe in and act on the inherent dignity of the people they lead. The use of O'Toole's example is to illustrate the need for the Justice Institute to take the lead with this initiative. The use of Kouzes and Posner's (1995) leadership model, which includes "inspiring a shared vision" and "enabling others to act" (p. 2), will facilitate open exploration among the stakeholders.

Those involved with the curriculum planning process must determine how the current material is meeting the needs of the industry and the adopted standards. The research data clearly

shows that there are potentially large gaps between what is offered and is delivered and what is wanted in the field. Extensive and clear communications with the fire service representatives are necessary to define what the recommendations are, how they can positively impact the organization, and how they can be implemented. The data from the research initially may be seen as a threat to the culture of the fire service and therefore a threat to the organization.

The Justice Institute is in an awkward position when it comes to modifying program content. The JI almost has a monopoly in that it is the largest institution delivering programs; however, it still needs to sell itself to the industry. Without the fire departments purchasing services, there is no need for the Fire & Safety Division and the Justice Institute. Therefore, the JI must to convince the industry of the need for improved program content that creates better leaders. In O'Toole's (1995) description of the leadership style of Max De Pree, his Rushmorean leadership qualities could pass for those of a marketing executive. "According to Warren Bennis, all successful leaders must know 'what they want, why they want it, how to communicate that to others to gain their support to get it' " (O'Toole, 1995, p. 47).

Recommendations for the Fire Service

Fire services operate across British Columbia, North America, and the rest of the world with similar organizational structures to each other, as well as to that of the Fire & Safety Division of the Justice Institute of British Columbia. The benefit of this commonality is that the same principles of implementing these recommendations within the Justice Institute will also work at the individual fire department level. In fact, since the scope is considerably smaller, implementation may be easier and more successful. The local department has the flexibility to observe immediate results based on the interaction with the individual members, whereas in a larger organization the time period may be much longer.

Future Research

This project focused on identifying the leadership competencies that firefighters prefer from their leaders. However, the application of the data and the themes identified have application in virtually any workplace or any organization.

The theme of communication has application in any situation or within any type of organization. The importance of the ability to communicate effectively in writing, verbally, and with specific systems is emphasized throughout the research. This theme also interrelates and forms a foundation with the other identified themes to structure a healthy organization. Initially, communication would seem one of the easier competencies to develop, yet it is one of the most complicated and one that requires the most resources. Future research could identify other strategies to incorporate a variety of uncomplicated methods into the daily activities of an organization.

The scope of this project was limited by time. In the future, it would be of interest to focus the research within a specific organization over a longer period, defining performance standards and doing pre- and post-data analysis to determine what strategies are more effective within an established culture such as the fire service. A future study may include a specific group within a specific organization, or a specific group from several organizations. The electronic survey generated a tremendous amount of data that may reveal more insight into the identified themes if viewed with a narrower focus.

In chapter 4, recommendation two was to **Work toward the creation of learning organization by creating learning individuals.** Future research to discover how to apply this concept into a traditional organization such as the fire service would be invaluable information.

To successfully introduce change into the fire service, influencing the culture is also necessary. The literature gives several examples of private sector organizations that have made this transition. There is very little written on public sector organizations and specifically the fire service on making this same transition. At times, the culture of the fire service seems very strong and raises the question, is the fire service able to make this transition? The data clearly indicate that for the organization's survival and for it to be in command of its future, adopting the principles of a learning organization is necessary.

CHAPTER SIX – LESSONS LEARNED

Research Project Lessons Learned

The idea for this project came as I was exploring strategies to travel new career paths within the fire service. I quickly discovered that there was little information available on how individuals in the fire service could prepare and work toward positions of more responsibility. The solutions I was discovering seemed to resolve around situations where individuals who reached these positions did so as a result of popularity, seniority, or the appearance of having excellent luck of being in the right place at the right time. In comparison with other industries, I found that advancement within the fire service was the exception to the rule, and that the organizational culture was more influential than what may be found elsewhere.

In this pursuit for understanding, I began to comprehend the influence of organizational culture on the fire service. Individuals must somewhat assimilate with this culture to gain acceptance. Without acceptance, individuals are seen as outsiders and threats to the organization. I began to realize that in order to introduce change that would improve training programs and ultimately the promotional process, the culture of the organization would have to accept this change. In essence, the state of being becomes a stakeholder of the organization. I am not sure if this situation is common in other organizations or industries. To introduce change in the fire service, organizational culture must be seen as an opportunity and treated as such, for if it is treated as an obstacle, the possibility of success with the introduction of change of any kind will be limited.

In undertaking a project of this magnitude, I consider that it is important for a researcher to have a solid base of support. I found that the distance I was from members of my cohort and the project sponsor did not allow for easy face-to-face communications. At times, I think that the

distance was a disadvantage to the project. In future I would organize a group of individuals to act as an advisory group to provide peer review and critical feedback before beginning the project.

For this project, I took the approach of an online survey to gather information from the members of the fire service. The online survey tool is excellent for distributing and for collecting and analyzing information from the participants. I would not hesitate to use this approach again in the future. To improve on the process, I would recommend that the researcher employ an advisory group to focus in on what potential information the researcher is seeking and to fine-tune the survey questions. Members of the fire service are constantly asked to complete surveys, so the shorter and more efficient the survey, the greater the response and richness of the information.

The advisory group can also assist the researcher in identifying the target audience. In my project, I was concerned about participation and sent invitations electronically to every professional organization representing the fire service in the province of BC. Ultimately, the survey reached across Canada, North America, and parts of Australia and New Zealand. This large and diverse response indicated that the fire service shares commonalities across the regions, and that some solutions will apply in all organizations. I did consider that surveying a large group also loses some connection between the researcher. The nature of a large survey and the data generated do not easily allow for an intimate relationship to develop or a true qualitative or action research style. For future projects, I would recommend a smaller scale to discover if the results are more enriching. This approach may allow the researcher to develop a close connection with the project from inquiry to implementation and to generate a high rate of success.

I believe the survey was successful and that it also has a vast amount of undiscovered data in the results. Perhaps future researchers will be able to draw out and build on this information. This may construct new or expand on existing themes identified and create more comprehensive strategies that organizations can utilize.

In this project, I chose a quantitative research method to gather data, with the intention of switching to a qualitative method to analyze and create implementation strategies. For a project that is looking into issues that have the potential to introduce deep change into an organization, I think a qualitative method would prove more successful. In the fire service, influencing the organizational culture will occur faster if all members buy into the recommendations of a project. A qualitative method allows for both the researcher and the research subjects to come together and jointly participate in the project. This participative situation better creates ownership by those within the organization and makes implementation that much easier, as those most affected are part of the process.

The fire service is highly traditional, with several written and unwritten rules that form the culture. In some settings, individuals may be unwilling to speak openly about issues that may be determined by others as a threat to the culture and ultimately the organization. The fire service is also a paramilitary organization where rank and status influence decisions and behaviour. I found that the anonymity of the online survey created a safe environment in which the barriers of rank or union vs. management disappeared and open discussion occurred. I was amazed at the commonality that exists among all members of the fire service. The polarization that exists in more public discussions vanishes and in its place commonality and a willingness of all members appear. It is important that researchers and organizations learn how to discover and nurture this commonality, as it will assist in creating a desire for learning and change from all

levels within an organization.

At the beginning of the project, I was concerned that there was not enough literature related to the fire service to support a project of this nature. In addition, at times the data results seemed to deviate from the literature and to take me on an unexpected journey. I find now that it is partially true that little specific literature exists for the fire service. However, I realize that there is extensive material available that has yet to be applied to the fire service. Perhaps future research will incorporate these other diverse sources, which at first glance may not appear related, and thereby expand the understanding of the service.

The researcher's hope for this project is that it acts as a catalyst to generate interest at all levels of the fire service. This desire will allow for the influence of the organizational culture and ultimately work to create learning organizations. A demand that begins with the end user of educational programs will allow the Justice Institute to continue to develop fire officer leadership programs. These programs can expand to offer individuals the opportunity to acquire and fine-tune the preferred leadership competencies identified within this project. These individuals will then return to their organizations and begin to create learning organizations within the fire service.

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APPENDIX A

Focus Group Consent Form

This research project is part of the requirement for a Master of Arts in Leadership and Training at Royal Roads University.

The student concerned is **Monty Armstrong**. Mr. Armstrong's credentials with Royal Roads University can be verified by telephoning either Dr. David Reagan, Faculty Advisor, or Dr. Gerry Nixon, Dean of Organizational Leadership and Learning, Royal Roads University at or Ms. Angella Wilson, Administrative Manager.

This document constitutes an agreement to take part in a Focus Group of six members for a research program, the objective of which is to determine what skills and competencies are desired for supervisory leadership positions within the municipal fire service.

The function of the Focus Group will be to discuss the results of the on line survey and to discuss desired skills, competencies and training for supervisory leadership positions in the fire service. The time commitment is estimated to be approximately 4 hours.

Focus Group information will be tape recorded and transcribed by Mr. Armstrong. Only Mr. Armstrong will have access to the tape recording. The original tape recording will be destroyed upon transcription. Where appropriate data will be summarized, in anonymous format, in the body of the final report. At no time will any specific comments be attributed to any individual unless specific agreement has been obtained beforehand.

A copy of the final report will be housed at Royal Roads University and be publicly accessible.

Prospective Focus Group members are not compelled to take part in this research project. If an individual does elect to take part, she or he is free to withdraw at any time with no prejudice. Refusing to take part, or withdrawing once underway will have no effect upon employment or advancement. Similarly if employees or other individuals elect not to take part in this research project, this information will also be maintained in confidence.

If you require further clarification or have any questions, please feel free to ask Mr. Armstrong.

By signing this letter, the individual gives free and informed consent to participating in this project.

Name: (Please Print): _____

Signed: _____

Date: _____

APPENDIX B

Survey Invitation and Introductory Statement

This survey is a component of a research project, which is part of the requirement for a Master of Arts in Leadership and Training at Royal Roads University.

The student concerned is **Monty Armstrong.** Mr. Armstrong's credentials with Royal Roads University can be verified by telephoning either Dr. David Reagan, Faculty Advisor, or Dr. Gerry Nixon, Dean of Organizational Leadership and Learning, Royal Roads University or Ms. Angella Wilson, Administrative Manager.

Completion of this questionnaire assumes that you give consent to take part in the research project, the objective of which is to determine what skills and competencies are desired for supervisory leadership positions within the municipal fire service.

The questions on the survey will ask about the skills and competencies that you find important for supervisory leadership positions in the fire service. The survey results are anonymous and results cannot be traced to any single person. The time commitment is estimated to be approximately 30 to 60 minutes.

You are not compelled to take this survey. If you do elect to take part, you are free to withdraw at any time. As the survey is anonymous, no one will know if you decided to take part or not.

A copy of the final report will be available and housed at Royal Roads University and be publicly accessible.

If you require further clarification or have any questions, please feel free to ask Monty Armstrong

APPENDIX C

On-Line Survey Results

Monty Armstrong
Leadership in the Fire Service
Summary Results

1. COMMUNICATION						
	Not Important At All	**Slightly Important**	**Important**	**Very Important**	**Extremely Important**	**Response Average**
Demonstrates Active Listening Skills	1% (1)	0% (0)	6% (10)	**49% (75)**	44% (68)	**4.36**
Communicates in a clear and precise manner	1% (1)	0% (0)	3% (4)	40% (62)	**56% (87)**	**4.52**
Provides clear instructions and directions when giving assignments.	1% (1)	0% (0)	1% (2)	38% (59)	**60% (92)**	**4.56**
Demonstrates effective written communications	1% (1)	5% (7)	22% (34)	**49% (76)**	23% (36)	**3.90**
Able to communicate the organization's mission, vision, and values.	1% (2)	3% (4)	21% (32)	**38% (58)**	**38% (58)**	**4.08**
					Total Respondents	**154**
					(skipped this question)	1

2. Workplace Environment						
_____	Not Important At All	Slightly Important	Important	Very Important	Extremely Important	Response Average
Establishes rapport easily and is approachable.	1% (1)	3% (4)	21% (32)	**50% (77)**	26% (40)	**3.98**
Applies policy and procedures consistently	1% (1)	0% (0)	15% (23)	**51% (78)**	34% (52)	**4.17**
Encourages and maintains a positive work environment.	1% (1)	0% (0)	12% (18)	**51% (79)**	36% (56)	**4.23**
Respects diversity in the workplace.	1% (1)	1% (2)	24% (37)	**44% (68)**	30% (46)	**4.01**
Able to give helpful and constructive performance evaluations.	1% (1)	1% (2)	23% (35)	**48% (74)**	27% (42)	**4.00**
Actively expresses care and concern about the welfare of others.	1% (1)	5% (7)	20% (31)	**40% (62)**	34% (53)	**4.03**
Creates and ensures an environment that is free of discrimination and harassment.	1% (1)	1% (2)	21% (32)	32% (50)	**45% (69)**	**4.19**
					Total Respondents	**154**
					(skipped this question)	**1**

3. PLANNING AND ORGANIZATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

	Not Important At All	Slightly Important	Important	Very Important	Extremely Important	Response Average
Gathers relevant facts before initiating change.	1% (1)	0% (0)	14% (21)	**49% (76)**	36% (56)	**4.21**
Identifies and prepares goals to meet future challenges.	1% (1)	2% (3)	24% (37)	**51% (78)**	23% (35)	**3.93**
Plans and implements community based initiatives.	1% (2)	12% (18)	**39% (60)**	**39% (60)**	9% (14)	**3.43**
Sets goals and action plans.	1% (1)	5% (7)	26% (40)	**44% (67)**	25% (39)	**3.88**
Concern about quality standards.	1% (1)	0% (0)	18% (28)	**53% (81)**	29% (44)	**4.08**
Conducts, implements, and evaluates strategic planning.	1% (1)	6% (10)	24% (37)	**50% (77)**	19% (29)	**3.80**
Influences people to follow the Mission Statement, the Vision Statement, the Principles and Practices.	3% (5)	6% (10)	30% (46)	**38% (58)**	23% (35)	**3.70**
Organizes time and tasks efficiently.	1% (1)	1% (2)	30% (46)	**45% (69)**	23% (36)	**3.89**

Understands, encourages and uses technology effectively.	1% (1)	3% (5)	34% (53)	**45% (69)**	17% (26)	**3.74**
Handles current financial and human resources effectively.	1% (1)	2% (3)	19% (30)	**50% (77)**	28% (43)	**4.03**
					Total Respondents	**154**
					(skipped this question)	**1**

4. HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT						
_____	**Not Important At All**	**Slightly Important**	**Important**	**Very Important**	**Extremely Important**	**Response Average**
Enhances team morale and motivation.	1% (1)	0% (0)	8% (13)	**52% (80)**	39% (60)	**4.29**
Able to take ownership of mistakes.	1% (1)	1% (1)	11% (17)	32% (50)	**55% (85)**	**4.41**
Demonstrates flexibility by adjusting readily to change in the work environment.	1% (1)	1% (1)	21% (33)	**47% (72)**	31% (47)	**4.06**
Establishes the right balance between career and family	1% (1)	3% (5)	23% (35)	**40% (62)**	33% (51)	**4.02**
Works well under stress.	1% (1)	1% (1)	10% (16)	42% (64)	**47% (72)**	**4.33**
Learns continuously by seeking knowledge,	1% (1)	0% (0)	16% (24)	**51% (79)**	32% (50)	**4.15**

skills and experience						
Encourages mentoring opportunities.	1% (2)	1% (2)	29% (44)	**51% (78)**	18% (28)	**3.83**
Identifies employee training needs.	1% (1)	1% (1)	26% (40)	**53% (81)**	20% (31)	**3.91**
Develops a team and maximizes its performance.	1% (1)	1% (2)	14% (21)	**49% (76)**	35% (54)	**4.17**
Recognizes and rewards positive performance.	1% (1)	2% (3)	23% (36)	**44% (67)**	31% (47)	**4.01**
Ensures a meaningful performance evaluation process takes place.	1% (1)	4% (6)	31% (48)	**47% (72)**	18% (27)	**3.77**
Addresses below standard performance so that improvement occurs.	1% (1)	1% (1)	23% (35)	**51% (79)**	25% (38)	**3.99**
Approaches mistakes as learning opportunities.	1% (1)	2% (3)	22% (34)	**51% (79)**	24% (37)	**3.96**
Coaches, guides and offers advice without assuming control.	1% (1)	1% (2)	24% (37)	**47% (73)**	27% (41)	**3.98**
Counsels, mentors or coaches others towards performance	1% (1)	1% (2)	21% (33)	**53% (82)**	23% (36)	**3.97**

improvement.						
Stimulates and supports creativity and innovations in others.	1% (1)	3% (5)	29% (45)	**45% (69)**	22% (34)	**3.84**
Encourages contribution and participation by all members of the team.	1% (1)	1% (2)	20% (31)	**45% (70)**	32% (50)	**4.08**
					Total Respondents	154
					(skipped this question)	1

5. PROBLEM SOLVING AND CONFLICT RESOLUTION						
_____	**Not Important At All**	**Slightly Important**	**Important**	**Very Important**	**Extremely Important**	**Response Average**
Makes difficult decisions in a timely manner.	1% (1)	0% (0)	14% (22)	**45% (69)**	40% (62)	**4.24**
Encourages a willingness to work on difficult problems.	1% (1)	0% (0)	19% (30)	**53% (81)**	27% (42)	**4.06**
Addresses the source, not just the symptom, of problems.	1% (1)	0% (0)	14% (21)	38% (59)	**47% (73)**	**4.32**
Resolves problems using consultation and consensus, when	1% (1)	2% (3)	25% (38)	**51% (79)**	21% (33)	**3.91**

appropriate.						
Addresses and prevents workplace conflicts.	1% (1)	1% (1)	24% (37)	**51% (78)**	24% (37)	**3.97**
Anticipates and manages problems effectively.	1% (1)	1% (2)	21% (32)	**51% (79)**	26% (40)	**4.01**
					Total Respondents	**154**
					(skipped this question)	**1**

6. COMMUNICATION Understands the basic behavioural skills of effective interpersonal communications. Listens actively and sincerely when being questioned.

———	**1: Not Competent**	**2: Slightly Competent**	**3: Competent**	**4:Very Competent**	**5:Extremely Competent**	**X: Unable to Assess**	**Respondent Total**
My Skill Level	0% (0)	0% (0)	26% (35)	**59% (81)**	15% (20)	1% (1)	**137**
My Supervisor's Skill Level	3% (4)	8% (11)	22% (30)	**45% (61)**	16% (22)	7% (9)	**137**
						Total Respondents	**137**
						(skipped this question)	**18**

7. Engages in effective two-way communication.

———	**1: Not Competent**	**2: Slightly Competent**	**3: Competent**	**4: Very Competent**	**5: Extremely Competent**	**X: Unable to Assess**	**Respondent Total**
My Skill Level	0% (0)	2% (3)	28% (38)	**50% (68)**	20% (28)	1% (1)	**137**
My Supervisor's Skill Level	4% (5)	7% (10)	23% (32)	**48% (66)**	14% (19)	5% (7)	**137**
						Total Respondents	**137**
						(skipped this question)	**18**

8. Provides clear instructions and directions when giving assignments.

———	1: Not Competent	2: Slightly Competent	3: Competent	4: Very Competent	5: Extremely Competent	X: Unable to Assess	Respondent Total
My Skill Level	0% (0)	2% (3)	34% (47)	**42% (58)**	18% (25)	3% (4)	**137**
My Supervisor's Skill Level	1% (1)	9% (12)	29% (40)	**47% (65)**	8% (11)	6% (8)	**137**
						Total Respondents	**137**
						(skipped this question)	**18**

9. Uses appropriate wording when speaking and communicates effectively in writing.

———	1: Not Competent	2: Slightly Competent	3: Competent	4: Very Competent	5: Extremely Competent	X: Unable to Assess	Respondent Total
My Skill Level	0% (0)	4% (5)	30% (41)	**44% (60)**	21% (29)	1% (2)	**137**
My Supervisor's Skill Level	3% (4)	8% (11)	26% (35)	**37% (51)**	20% (28)	6% (8)	**137**
						Total Respondents	**137**
						(skipped this question)	**18**

10. Conveys the organization's messages, information, and expectations accurately and appropriately.

———	1: Not Competent	2: Slightly Competent	3: Competent	4: Very Competent	5: Extremely Competent	X: Unable to Assess	Respondent Total
My Skill Level	0% (0)	4% (5)	31% (43)	**51% (70)**	11% (15)	3% (4)	**137**
My Supervisor's Skill Level	4% (6)	6% (8)	28% (38)	**39% (54)**	18% (24)	5% (7)	**137**
						Total Respondents	**137**
						(skipped this question)	**18**

11. WORKPLACE ENVIRONMENT Establishes rapport easily and is approachable.

	1: Not Competent	2: Slightly Competent	3: Competent	4: Very Competent	5: Extremely Competent	X: Unable to Assess	Respondent Total
My Skill Level	0% (0)	3% (4)	18% (24)	**45% (61)**	34% (47)	1% (1)	**137**
My Supervisor's Skill Level	4% (5)	9% (12)	28% (39)	**30% (41)**	25% (34)	5% (7)	**137**
						Total Respondents	**137**
						(skipped this question)	**18**

12. Encourages and maintains a positive work environment.

	1: Not Competent	2: Slightly Competent	3: Competent	4: Very Competent	5: Extremely Competent	X: Unable to Assess	Respondent Total
My Skill Level	1% (1)	1% (1)	24% (33)	**48% (66)**	25% (34)	1% (2)	**137**
My Supervisor's Skill Level	5% (7)	13% (18)	24% (33)	**29% (40)**	23% (32)	5% (7)	**137**
						Total Respondents	**137**
						(skipped this question)	**18**

13. Applies policy and procedures consistently.

	1: Not Competent	2: Slightly Competent	3: Competent	4: Very Competent	5: Extremely Competent	X: Unable to Assess	Respondent Total
My Skill Level	0% (0)	3% (4)	31% (43)	**44% (60)**	20% (27)	2% (3)	**137**
My Supervisor's Skill Level	5% (7)	11% (15)	28% (38)	**34% (46)**	17% (23)	6% (8)	**137**
						Total Respondents	**137**
						(skipped this question)	**18**

14. Respects diversity in the workplace.

	1: Not Competent	2: Slightly Competent	3: Competent	4: Very Competent	5: Extremely Competent	X: Unable to Assess	Respondent Total

	1% (1)	1% (1)	20% (28)	**50% (68)**	26% (36)	2% (3)	
My Skill Level	1% (1)	1% (1)	20% (28)	**50% (68)**	26% (36)	2% (3)	**137**
My Supervisor's Skill Level	1% (2)	6% (8)	29% (40)	**37% (51)**	20% (27)	7% (9)	**137**
					Total Respondents		**137**
					(skipped this question)		**18**

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15. Able to give helpful and constructive performance evaluations.

	1: Not Competent	2: Slightly Competent	3: Competent	4: Very Competent	5: Extremely Competent	X: Unable to Assess	Responden t Total
My Skill Level	0% (0)	4% (5)	**42% (57)**	39% (53)	10% (14)	6% (8)	**137**
My Supervisor's Skill Level	9% (12)	8% (11)	23% (31)	**34% (46)**	19% (26)	8% (11)	**137**
					Total Respondents		**137**
					(skipped this question)		**18**

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16. PLANING AND ORGANIZATIONAL DEVELOPMENT Gathers relevant facts before initiating change.

	1: Not Competent	2: Slightly Competent	3: Competent	4: Very Competent	5: Extremely Competent	X: Unable to Assess	Responden t Total
My Skills	0% (0)	2% (3)	25% (34)	**50% (69)**	19% (26)	4% (6)	**137**
My Supervisor's Skills	6% (8)	8% (11)	26% (35)	**36% (49)**	17% (23)	9% (12)	**137**
					Total Respondents		**137**
					(skipped this question)		**18**

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17. Identifies and prepares goals to meet future challenges.

	1: Not Competent	2: Slightly Competent	3: Competent	4: Very Competent	5: Extremely Competent	X: Unable to Assess	Responden t Total
My Skills	0% (0)	3% (4)	36% (50)	**45% (61)**	12% (16)	4% (6)	**137**

	1: Not Competent	2: Slightly Competent	3: Competent	4: Very Competent	5: Extremely Competent	X: Unable to Assess	Respondent Total
My Supervisor's Skills	6% (8)	8% (11)	22% (30)	**42% (58)**	16% (22)	7% (9)	**137**
					Total Respondents		**137**
					(skipped this question)		**18**

18. Plans and implements community based initiatives.

	1: Not Competent	2: Slightly Competent	3: Competent	4: Very Competent	5: Extremely Competent	X: Unable to Assess	Respondent Total
My Skills	1% (1)	8% (11)	**41% (56)**	27% (37)	11% (15)	12% (17)	**137**
My Supervisor's Skills	5% (7)	12% (17)	**29% (40)**	25% (34)	14% (19)	15% (20)	**137**
					Total Respondents		**137**
					(skipped this question)		**18**

19. Sets goals and action plans.

	1: Not Competent	2: Slightly Competent	3: Competent	4: Very Competent	5: Extremely Competent	X: Unable to Assess	Respondent Total
My Skills	0% (0)	5% (7)	36% (50)	**43% (59)**	13% (18)	2% (3)	**137**
My Supervisor's Skills	5% (7)	11% (15)	22% (30)	**40% (55)**	16% (22)	7% (9)	**137**
					Total Respondents		**137**
					(skipped this question)		**18**

20. Concern about quality standards.

	1: Not Competent	2: Slightly Competent	3: Competent	4: Very Competent	5: Extremely Competent	X: Unable to Assess	Respondent Total
My Skills	0% (0)	0% (0)	23% (31)	**44% (60)**	33% (45)	1% (1)	**137**
My Supervisor's Skills	2% (3)	9% (12)	26% (36)	**34% (47)**	26% (35)	4% (6)	**137**
					Total Respondents		**137**

| | | | | | | (skipped this question) | 18 |

21. Conducts, implements, and evaluates strategic planning.

	1: Not Competent	2: Slightly Competent	3: Competent	4: Very Competent	5: Extremely Competent	X: Unable to Assess	Respondent Total
My Skills	1% (1)	7% (9)	**41% (56)**	34% (47)	10% (14)	7% (10)	**137**
My Supervisor's Skills	7% (10)	10% (14)	22% (30)	**35% (48)**	16% (22)	9% (13)	**137**
						Total Respondents	**137**
						(skipped this question)	18

22. HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT Enhances team morale and motivation.

	1: Not Competent	2: Slightly Competent	3: Competent	4: Very Competent	5: Extremely Competent	X: Unable to Assess	Respondent Total
My Skills	0% (0)	4% (6)	22% (30)	**46% (63)**	26% (35)	2% (3)	**137**
My Supervisor's Skills	9% (13)	11% (15)	23% (31)	**36% (49)**	16% (22)	5% (7)	**137**
						Total Respondents	**137**
						(skipped this question)	18

23. Able to take ownership of mistakes.

	1: Not Competent	2: Slightly Competent	3: Competent	4: Very Competent	5: Extremely Competent	X: Unable to Assess	Respondent Total
My Skills	0% (0)	1% (2)	14% (19)	**44% (60)**	40% (55)	1% (1)	**137**
My Supervisor's Skills	7% (9)	9% (13)	23% (32)	**28% (38)**	25% (34)	8% (11)	**137**
						Total Respondents	**137**
						(skipped this question)	18

24. Establishes the right balance between career and family.

	1: Not Competent	2: Slightly Competent	3: Competent	4: Very Competent	5: Extremely Competent	X: Unable to Assess	Respondent Total
My Skills	1% (2)	12% (17)	32% (44)	**41% (56)**	12% (16)	1% (2)	**137**
My Supervisor's Skills	4% (6)	11% (15)	26% (35)	**33% (45)**	8% (11)	18% (25)	**137**
						Total Respondents	**137**
						(skipped this question)	**18**

25. Identifies employee training needs.

	1: Not Competent	2: Slightly Competent	3: Competent	4: Very Competent	5: Extremely Competent	X: Unable to Assess	Respondent Total
My Skills	0% (0)	3% (4)	28% (38)	**50% (68)**	16% (22)	4% (6)	**137**
My Supervisor's Skills	6% (8)	12% (17)	28% (39)	**34% (47)**	9% (13)	9% (13)	**137**
						Total Respondents	**137**
						(skipped this question)	**18**

26. Develops a team and maximizes its performance.

	1: Not Competent	2: Slightly Competent	3: Competent	4: Very Competent	5: Extremely Competent	X: Unable to Assess	Respondent Total
My Skills	0% (0)	3% (4)	33% (45)	**42% (57)**	18% (24)	5% (7)	**137**
My Supervisor's Skills	9% (13)	13% (18)	24% (33)	**30% (41)**	15% (20)	9% (13)	**137**
						Total Respondents	**137**
						(skipped this question)	**18**

27. Develops a team and maximizes its performance.

	1: Not Competent	2: Slightly Competent	3: Competent	4: Very Competent	5: Extremely Competent	X: Unable to Assess	Respondent Total

My Skills	0% (0)	4% (5)	32% (44)	**42% (58)**	15% (21)	7% (10)	137
My Supervisor's Skills	9% (12)	14% (19)	24% (33)	**28% (39)**	15% (20)	12% (16)	137
					Total Respondents	137
					(skipped this question)	18

28. PROBLEM SOLVING AND CONFLICT RESOLUTION Makes difficult decisions in a timely manner.

	1: Not Competent	2: Slightly Competent	3: Competent	4: Very Competent	5: Extremely Competent	X: Unable to Assess	Responden t Total
My Skill Level	0% (0)	3% (4)	35% (48)	**46% (63)**	18% (24)	1% (1)	137
My Supervisor's Skill Level	7% (9)	9% (13)	22% (30)	**37% (51)**	18% (25)	7% (9)	137
						Total Respondents	137
						(skipped this question)	18

29. Encourages a willingness to work on difficult problems.

	1: Not Competent	2: Slightly Competent	3: Competent	4: Very Competent	5: Extremely Competent	X: Unable to Assess	Responden t Total
My Skill Level	0% (0)	3% (4)	28% (38)	**48% (66)**	20% (28)	1% (1)	137
My Supervisor's Skill Level	4% (6)	7% (9)	24% (33)	**40% (55)**	20% (27)	5% (7)	137
						Total Respondents	137
						(skipped this question)	18

30. Resolves problems using consultation and consensus, when appropriate.

	1: Not Competent	2: Slightly Competent	3: Competent	4: Very Competent	5: Extremely Competent	X: Unable to Assess	Responden t Total
My Skill Level	0% (0)	1% (2)	31% (43)	**47% (65)**	18% (25)	1% (2)	137

My Supervisor's Skill Level	5% (7)	13% (18)	21% (29)	**38% (52)**	16% (22)	7% (9)	**137**
				Total Respondents			**137**
				(skipped this question)			**18**

31. Addresses and prevents workplace conflicts.

	1: Not Competent	2: Slightly Competent	3: Competent	4: Very Competent	5: Extremely Competent	X: Unable to Assess	Respondent Total
My Skill Level	0% (0)	5% (7)	**42% (58)**	37% (51)	13% (18)	3% (4)	**137**
My Supervisor's Skill Level	9% (12)	12% (17)	27% (37)	**35% (48)**	10% (14)	7% (10)	**137**
				Total Respondents			**137**
				(skipped this question)			**18**

32. Anticipates and manages problems effectively.

	1: Not Competent	2: Slightly Competent	3: Competent	4: Very Competent	5: Extremely Competent	X: Unable to Assess	Respondent Total
My Skill Level	0% (0)	5% (7)	39% (53)	**46% (63)**	9% (13)	1% (1)	**137**
My Supervisor's Skill Level	7% (10)	9% (12)	29% (40)	**36% (50)**	12% (16)	7% (9)	**137**
				Total Respondents			**137**
				(skipped this question)			**18**

33. Below, please list and rate any other leadership skills you think should be considered. Include information on your skill level and your supervisor's skill level as in the previous questions. Skill Considered

	Total Respondents	**33**
	(skipped this question)	**122**

34.

		Response Percent	Response Total
Male		**90.9%**	**120**
Female		9.1%	12
	Total Respondents		**132**
	(skipped this question)		**23**

35.

		Response Percent	Response Total
CAREER MEMBER		**66.7%**	**88**
PAID-ON-CALL		5.3%	7
VOLUNTEER		13.6%	18
Other (please specify)		14.4%	19
	Total Respondents		**132**
	(skipped this question)		**23**

36. WHAT BEST DESCRIBES YOUR EMPLOYMENT?

		Response Percent	Response Total
EXEMPT STAFF		**48.5%**	**64**
UNION – IAFF		25%	33
UNION – OTHER		11.4%	15
Other (please specify)		15.2%	20
	Total Respondents		**132**
	(skipped this question)		**23**

37. WHAT BEST DESCRIBES YOUR MAIN DUTIES

		Response Percent	Response Total
FIRE SUPPRESSION		**33.3%**	**44**
FIRE PREVENTION		9.8%	13
PUBLIC EDUCATION		1.5%	2
TRAINING		9.8%	13
ADMINISTRATION		31.1%	41
Other (please specify)		14.4%	19
Total Respondents			132
(skipped this question)			23

38. ARE YOU A SUPERVISOR?

		Response Percent	Response Total
YES		**77.3%**	**102**
NO		22.7%	30
Total Respondents			132
(skipped this question)			23

39. WHAT BEST DESCRIBES YOUR POSITION?

		Response Percent	Response Total
FIRE CHIEF		**25%**	**33**
DEPUTY FIRE CHIEF		6.1%	8
ASSISTANT FIRE CHIEF		10.6%	14
BATTALION FIRE CHIEF		0.8%	1
CAPTAIN		10.6%	14
LIEUTENANT		5.3%	7

		Response Percent	Response Total
FIRE PREVENTION OFFICER		4.5%	6
FIRE FIGHTER		13.6%	18
Other (please specify)		23.5%	31
	Total Respondents		132
	(skipped this question)		23

40. IF YOU ARE AN OFFICER, WHAT BEST DESCRIBES YOUR ENTRY INTO YOUR POSITON?

		Response Percent	Response Total
JOB COMPETION OPEN TO EXTERNAL CANDIDATES		**37.9%**	**50**
JOB COMPETION OPEN TO INTERNAL CANDIDATES		19.7%	26
OFFICER POOL/SENORITY PROCESS		8.3%	11
ELECTION		15.2%	20
Other (please specify)		18.9%	25
	Total Respondents		132
	(skipped this question)		23

41. WHAT LEVEL OF EDUCATION HAVE YOU COMPLETED?

		Response Percent	Response Total
Did not complete High School		2.3%	3
High School		13.6%	18

		Response Percent	Response Total
Diploma			
Some Post-Secondary		**25.8**%	**34**
Certificate		12.1%	16
2 Year Diploma		17.4%	23
Undergraduate Degree		18.2%	24
Graduate Degree		10.6%	14
	Total Respondents		132
	(skipped this question)		23

42. ARE YOU CURRENTLY ENROLLED IN AN EDUCATION PROGRAM?			
_____		Response Percent	Response Total
No		**63.6**%	**84**
Yes, College Certificate		8.3%	11
Yes, 2 Year Diploma		5.3%	7
Yes, Undergraduate Degree		3%	4
Yes, Graduate Degree		8.3%	11
Other (please specify)		11.4%	15
	Total Respondents		132
	(skipped this question)		23

43. Please use the space below for any additional comments.		
	Total Respondents	9
	(skipped this question)	146

44. Contact Information

	Total Respondents	**28**
	(skipped this question)	**127**

45. Comments or Feedback		
	Total Respondents	**14**
	(skipped this question)	**141**