

**AN OUTLINE FOR HARTSVILLE FIRE DEPARTMENT  
PERSONNEL TO COMPETE FOR CHIEF OFFICER  
POSITIONS**

**EXECUTIVE DEVELOPMENT**

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*Appendices B through F Not Included. Please visit the Learning Resource Center on the Web at <http://www.lrc.fema.gov/> to learn how to obtain this report in its entirety through Interlibrary Loan.*

## ABSTRACT

When the City of Hartsville changed its method of hiring upper management positions, it opened these positions to all possible candidates internal and external. It became evident that existing City personnel would need improved levels of training and education to compete with outside candidates.

This research paper attempted to determine if Hartsville Fire Department personnel were at a disadvantage when competing with others from outside the department. If Hartsville personnel were at a disadvantage, what would be necessary for them to be competitive? And was there any benefit to the community for personnel being competitive?

Descriptive and evaluative research were the methods chosen to complete the research. Literature review and two surveys were used to gather information. Surveys were answered by personnel of all ranks both inside and outside of the Hartsville Fire Department. Outside departments varied in size and structure. Departments and individuals surveyed included volunteer, combination, and career structures, and served both large and small areas and populations.

Disparity was found in level of education and certifications between Hartsville personnel and those surveyed from other fire departments. More potential applicants outside the organization had college degrees and certifications above basic fire fighting.

The surveys revealed similarities in requirements for Fire Chief positions among the departments surveyed. There were many similarities in the levels of education, certification, and preparation held by individuals outside the Hartsville Fire Department. Personnel surveyed inside the Hartsville Fire Department showed a lack of advanced training and education.

Literature review revealed that private industry and the Fire Service have recognized the

importance of advanced and post secondary education for executive officers. Many persons now compare the Fire Service to private industry. It becomes imperative for those seeking advancement to pursue both management skills and advanced fire certifications.

Private industry ideas for executive development were researched for comparison to Fire Service education. Research revealed a lack of training and education to be promoted to an executive level within the Hartsville Fire Department.

Research revealed that career planning is necessary. Those seeking advancement to the Chief Officer level must be willing to dedicate themselves to building a solid foundation of credentials. It was found that Hartsville firefighters should seek advanced training and education to be competitive against outside applicants. This training includes post-secondary education, advanced Fire Officer certification, computer training, lifelong learning, attendance at conferences, and peer networking.

Hartsville's citizens deserve quality leadership within the Fire department. Fire Department personnel must strive to educate themselves as well as keep abreast of changes in the Fire Service to provide this quality leadership.

**TABLE OF CONTENTS**

<b>ABSTRACT</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>INTRODUCTION</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>BACKGROUND AND SIGNIFICANCE</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>LITERATURE REVIEW</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>PROCEDURES</b>	<b>12</b>
<b>RESULTS</b>	<b>14</b>
<b>DISCUSSION</b>	<b>22</b>
<b>RECOMMENDATIONS</b>	<b>27</b>
<b>REFERENCES</b>	<b>32</b>
<b>APPENDIX A (Letter Sent with External Survey)</b>	<b>33</b>
<b>APPENDIX B (External Survey)</b>	<b>34</b>
<b>APPENDIX C (Internal Survey)</b>	<b>36</b>
<b>APPENDIX D (Results of External Survey)</b>	<b>37</b>
<b>APPENDIX E (Results of Internal Survey)</b>	<b>39</b>
<b>APPENDIX F (Comments from External Survey)</b>	<b>40</b>

## **INTRODUCTION**

The City of Hartsville has a policy requiring outside advertisement to fill certain positions when they become vacant within the City. Prior to the implementation of this policy in the early 1990s, Hartsville Fire Department personnel did not have to compete with external candidates for higher ranking, exempt positions within the Fire Department.

The purpose of the research project is to develop a plan that will help Hartsville Fire Department personnel to contend competitively for chief officer or management positions. This research paper will seek to answer the following questions:

1. Are Hartsville Fire Department personnel at a disadvantage when competing with candidates from outside the Fire Department for management positions?
2. What type (s) of training or education will enable these personnel to be competitive against other internal and external candidates?
3. What benefits could the community derive from fire department personnel being able to compete competitively in the promotional processes?

This project will use descriptive and evaluative research to answer these questions.

## **BACKGROUND & SIGNIFICANCE**

The Hartsville Fire Department is located in the Pee Dee Region of South Carolina. It is a combination department that protects the City of Hartsville and a fire district that extends into Darlington County. It was a volunteer organization until 1973 when the first career personnel were hired. Currently there are 14 career and 21 volunteer personnel.

Career personnel are assigned to three shifts, with a captain as the highest-ranking officer on each shift. All other personnel are daily personnel, including the Fire Chief, Assistant Chief,

and Fire Marshal, all of whom work normal business hours.

The City of Hartsville is a progressive City, and has won several awards for its planning efforts. It has a strong City Manager form of government, with seven persons serving on the City Council. The City has a good economic base and is the international headquarters for Sonoco Products Company, which is a Fortune 500 company. There are two colleges as well as a multitude of smaller businesses. It is rapidly becoming a retail center for the surrounding area.

In the early 1990's, Hartsville adopted a policy of advertising all exempt positions within the City to persons both inside and outside current City employment. This advertisement is done via newspapers, the South Carolina Job Service, and the Internet.

The positions that are filled in this manner include the City Manager and all department heads, as well as all other salaried and some non-salaried (hourly) positions. Within the Fire Department, this includes the positions of Fire Chief, Assistant Chief, Fire Marshal, and Shift Captain.

The Hartsville Fire Department was required to use this competitive process for the first time in 1998 when the Fire Chief retired in January. The Assistant Fire Chief was named interim Fire Chief, and competed with external candidates for the position. No other internal personnel applied for the chief's position.

National advertisement elicited over 60 applications. After reviewing all candidates' answers on a multiple-choice questionnaire, a list of ten semi-finalists was compiled. All were from outside, with the exception of the Assistant Chief. The ten candidates were then interviewed by a Professional Board composed of other Fire Service management personnel from fire departments around South Carolina. A Citizen Board consisting of citizens from the City also interviewed candidates. The list was then shortened to the top four candidates, with

three external candidates, and the current Assistant Chief being number four on the list.

In August 1998, for the first time, the City hired a Fire Chief from outside the organization. Although there was an internal candidate, he was not given the position. This process was used again in 1999 to fill the Fire Marshal position, and no career internal candidates applied for the position. Again, an individual from outside the organization filled the position.

Prior to the appointment of a chief from outside the Department, the assistant chief had automatically been promoted to the Fire Chief's position, when it became vacant. There was little emphasis on advanced Fire Service or management training for this or any other officer positions. Previous administrations did little to encourage further education or training for advancement. Before the mid 1990s, there were no standards, qualifications, or promotional processes for positions that became vacant. This has contributed to the lack of preparation for advancement in the department.

Training was done in house, and then only on the basics of fire fighting. Personnel were not encouraged to seek training from outside sources. Although several personnel had certifications from the South Carolina Fire Academy, few attended courses located at the Academy. Most of the training was done locally, and personnel were not encouraged to advance beyond basic firefighter certification. There was no emphasis or encouragement for personnel to develop management or executive skills that would be necessary for promotion to the upper ranks within the department.

Qualifications for each position were listed in their respective job description, but displayed a significant lack of clarity. There was no job description for volunteer firefighters. Promotion was simply by time in grade and at the fire chief's discretion. Again, this changed

somewhat in the mid 1990s, but there was no encouragement from senior fire department management to improve management skills or seek advanced fire officer training. This placed internal candidates at a disadvantage when competing for externally advertised positions.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

Research on career advancement in firefighting and in private business was carried out. Many individuals currently compare fire departments to business. Buhs (1998) states, "...the Fire Service becomes more businesslike..." (p. 56). He further states, "In keeping up with reinvented government, the Fire Service saw a need ... to achieve a businesslike approach to public service" (p. 57). A Fire Chief can be compared to the CEO of a private company, or other positions in upper management. Therefore, the principles used by private business to educate individuals for advancement to upper management can apply to the Fire Service.

Craig (1987) states executive development is "the process by which individuals increase their understanding and knowledge, and/or improve their skills and abilities, to perform better in their current positions or to prepare themselves for a position to which they can realistically aspire in the near future" (p. 37).

Craig (1987) further states that individuals should develop their own plan to advance up the career ladder. He lists seven steps for the individual plan. First, limit your objectives, and improve your skills two or three at a time. Second, have at least one easy objective. This allows for quick success in the plan, and motivates the individual to continue with the more difficult objectives. Third, the plan should include actions that can be taken immediately. Getting started is important, and could be as simple as finding and reading a self-improvement book.

Fourth, the individual should take actions under their personal control. If you must get

supervisor approval, this can slow the process. Move ahead with actions under personal control. Fifth, seek out on the job learning opportunities. More learning occurs on the job than in the classroom. Sixth, get feedback from others, including peers. In the self-improvement process, letting others know which skills are being honed allows them to give critical feedback on the process. Seventh, be sure to set benchmarks. Benchmarks allow the individual to define improvement, and recognize when that improvement has reached the target level. Everyone in the Fire Service should develop some type of career plan, whether seeking to advance or not.

Craig (1987) used a 1985 report in the Training magazine "Industry Report", to list contributions to professional development. The list included on the job training, formal education, formal on the job training, mentors, and formal and informal networking. Attending conferences and seminars, joining and participating in professional associations, and reading books, journals and magazines were also listed as vital.

Craig (1987) states that an organization has a successful executive development plan if it can fill key positions without delay, from within, and with confidence. Further, the choices must prove to be successful and talented personnel must be retained instead of moving on. Fulfilling these criteria requires that the organization must work with individuals, providing them the necessary training and education to move ahead in the organization.

Belasco (1990) believes organizations should help in motivating its people. He states, Any institution has to be organized so as to bring out the talent and capabilities within the organization; to encourage men to take initiative, give them a chance to show what they can do, and a scope within which to grow (p. 6).

Mascenik (2000) states, "Local governments over the last several years have started initiatives to provide better learning for employees" (p. 4). He further states, "Leaders in local

government have recently begun to realize the strategic value of employee learning. Many are now seeking to direct this activity in order to create a more effective organization” (p. 4).

Mascenik (2000) reviewed the City of Brea, California and the emphasis on learning there. Brea did this to “maintain and improve its competitive position and preserve the quality of community life by promoting continuous learning among staff” (p.4). The City of Brea encourages all employees to seek out new ideas and also fosters self-growth.

Mascenik (2000) believes that true learning is self-directed and the best learning is integrated into the organization’s daily activities. He states that local governments must remain competitive with the private sector for top quality employees. "Learning approaches should reflect the culture and mission of the organization" (p 5).

"No one - not boss, not a subordinate, not a supplier, not a customer - can take responsibility for another person's behavior change" (Smith, 1995, p 3). "Resistance to change is used too often as an excuse for failure rather than a motive force for success" (Smith, 1995, p 5). Two of Smith’s ten Management Principles are: 1) "Continually increase the number of individuals taking responsibility for their own change"; and 2) "Ensure each person always knows why his or her performance and change matters to the purpose and results of the whole organization" (p.50).

Kleiman (1994) suggests that individuals should take various courses throughout their career. She believes this is the thing that will keep people current in their field and eligible for advancement. College education is an absolute necessity. She further states that management courses are an important part of undergraduate education and must be continued throughout the career. This allows learning of management techniques in increments.

Kleiman (1994) states that each individual is responsible for their career advancement. She

states that "...you are the only one who can make things happen over the course of your working life. You are the only one in charge of your career" (p. 141). One must plan the course of their career in order to focus on goals. One must know where they wish to be in five years, as well as being flexible and able to transition with changes in the organization or profession (Kleiman).

Kleiman (1994) states, "Staying on the edge of computer technology is a lifelong must for managers" (p. 87). She further states, "In the 21<sup>st</sup> Century, jobs will require thinking abilities more than hands on skills. Get all the education and training possible" (p. 179). Kleiman quotes Michael J. Driver saying, "As we move into the Information Age, we will have to develop adaptive, multifocus thinking – change is everywhere – using lots of information, seeing it going in multiple directions." (p. 86)

Kleiman (1994) places a great deal of emphasis on both training and experience. It is imperative for individuals to have education beyond high school. "A high school diploma no longer suffices for a good paying job in the future" (p. 180). Kleiman states that it is essential to enroll in courses as often as possible to enhance professional advancement. If a company does not pay for this type of education, an individual must pay for it themselves. Companies tend to promote those who stay current with their job skills and who are willing to do this on their own.

Kleiman (1994) further believes that education must be tempered with experience. Employees must be aware of the way their organization operates, and have experience in that operation to move ahead. Networking is important for advancement. Development of a good professional network allows for professional interaction with those of similar interests and also of differing abilities and backgrounds.

In researching fire service periodicals for employment opportunities, many cities were searching for external candidates for fire chief. *Fire Engineering* magazine (2000), departments

in Michigan, Minnesota, and California sought an individual with a Bachelor's degree in business, public administration, or a related field. All seek varying levels of experience in multiple areas of Fire Service operations and administration.

*Fire Chief* magazine's (2000) classified advertisements for Fire Chiefs yielded similar results for fire departments in Arizona, Ohio, Wisconsin, Georgia, and California. All sought Bachelor's degrees, seven or more years of progressive fire experience, and the department in Arizona looked for Executive Fire Officer Program experience. This helped to confirm that fire chief level officers are expected to be educated much the same as top level executives in private industry.

Buhs (1998) states "the Fire Service saw a need ... to achieve a businesslike approach to public service". He reinforces the idea that the Fire Service showed approach its operation as a business.

Carter (2000) suggests that Fire Chiefs of the future, "...become computer literate; attend various local, county, state, and national seminars; build a library; join professional associations; commit time to the National Fire Academy; train regularly; broaden your administrative skills; and learn about laws that impact upon our daily operations" (p. 68). Again, the items listed show the necessity of taking a businesslike approach to administration in the Fire Service.

## **PROCEDURES**

There were two methods used for reaching the conclusions in this paper. The first involved research of various executive development techniques. The second method was the use of surveys.

Research sources included books on executive development and education used by

businesses and individuals in the private sector, and fire service periodicals. The Fire Service can be compared to a business in many ways. Therefore, the methods used by private industry may apply to executive training in the Fire Service. Periodicals, articles, and advertisements for Fire Chief positions in magazine employment sections provided further pertinent information.

The second method employed in gathering data was the survey method. The surveys were distributed to individuals internally and externally. The external survey was sent nationally to persons in departments ranging in size from all volunteer to large metropolitan career departments.

Surveys were sent to individuals and/or fire departments that had previously advertised for chief officers in magazines. Names were also derived from lists obtained from the South Carolina State Association of Fire Chiefs, the National Fire Academy list of graduates of the Executive Fire Officer Program, lists of former students of the author, and individuals who are part of the author's fire service network.

As there are many thousand fire departments across the country, it was decided to have a cross section of various size fire departments, from organizations in the several different regions of the country. It would be cost and time prohibitive to attempt to reach many more than the 125 departments that were mailed the survey.

An internal survey, distributed to Hartsville Fire Department personnel was also used. This was distributed to all individuals with more than one year of service in the department. The purpose of the surveys was to determine if there existed a training and educational disparity between individuals seeking to advance within the department and those seeking advancement outside the department. It would also allow a comparison of requirements for chief officers in other departments as compared to Hartsville.

The external survey consisted of two sections; the first section focused on the department itself, and the second section focused on the training and education of the individual completing the survey. The department questions covered the size of the department (including number of personnel), the population served, the size of service area, general qualifications and/or requirements for promotion to chief officer positions, and whether the department promoted internally or sought external candidates.

The section pertaining to individuals included questions about Fire Service certifications obtained or being sought, and about their level of college education. Individuals were asked if they had ever changed departments, and if so, at what rank.

The internal survey also had two sections. The first sought information including current time in the Fire Service, and certifications or educational opportunities taken. The second section was designed to ascertain what certifications or education the individual planned for the future.

A copy of each survey is included as follows: the external survey is Appendix A and the internal survey is Appendix B.

## **RESULTS**

The results of the surveys show a wide disparity between those persons externally who are in upper level Fire Service positions and Hartsville Fire Department personnel. A total of 125 surveys were distributed externally to various size fire departments across the country. A total of 81 replies were received.

It should be noted that not all respondents answered all questions, and some answered the questions in multiple ways. Therefore, the results may not always equal 100 percent. In some cases the results may be under 100 percent and in others may be over 100 percent.

Surveys were also distributed to members of the Hartsville Fire Department. A total of 22 individuals responded to this survey. There are several new personnel in the department with no certifications at this time that were not surveyed.

Responses from outside the department provided a wide range of qualifications and certifications required by the various departments. There was some variation in time in the Fire Service and there was a wide range of tracks taken to advance through the ranks. Some have changed departments to advance, while others have moved upward within their original organization. Departments served various sized areas and populations, were a mix of career, combination, and volunteer, and varied in number of employees and responses.

No respondents had less than ten years in the Fire Service. Twenty-one percent of the respondents had 11 to 20 years of experience, and the majority, over 75 percent, had 20 or more years in the Fire Service.

Chiefs of department comprised 43.2 percent of those responding, with another 34.6 percent at the assistant/deputy chief level. The remainder of those responding were battalion or division chiefs (16%), captain or other rank (6.17%), and included some that were currently in civilian positions.

The types of department were fairly evenly split between career and combination departments, with volunteer departments representing 3.7 percent of those responding. Career responders were at 49.4 percent, and combination departments made up the remaining 44.4 percent.

The number of personnel in represented departments was also fairly evenly distributed, although departments with 51 to 100 personnel were at 35.8 percent of the total. Departments with less than 50 employees totaled 19.8 percent, 101 to 250 employees were at 21 percent, and

those employing over 250 were at 23.5 percent of the total.

The total population served generally was greater than 10,000 persons. Only 6.7 percent of those responding departments served a population of less than 10,000. Departments serving 10,000 to 50,000 citizens were 35.8 percent, and those serving over 50,000 persons were 51.9 percent.

The greatest majority, 64.2 percent, has an area greater than 25 square miles. Sixteen percent served an area less than 10 square miles. 6.17 and 9.88 percent of the responders served 11 to 15 square miles and 16 to 25 square miles respectively.

The number of incident responses per year was varied, although the majority of the responders, 48.1 responded to over 5,000 incidents per year. 19.8 percent responded to 2,501 to 5,000 incidents, 16 percent responded to 1,001 to 2,500, and 13.6 percent were under 1,000 incidents per year. Not all respondents broke out the different types of responses by fire, EMS or other. This caused the results in these areas to be slightly off.

Responses were about equally split in the hiring category. Chief officer positions are advertised externally by 31.2 percent, 28.4 percent allow external and internal applications and 27.2 percent accept internal applicants only. Civil service examinations are used by 27.2 percent as part of their hiring process.

The greatest majority of departments responding, 75.3 percent, have specific qualifications for chief officer. Only 17.3 percent have no qualifications for chief officers. These qualifications varied by department and in some cases by state.

Fire Officer I was required by 23.5 percent of responding departments. Florida respondents noted that there is currently no Fire Officer II or III in that state. In states offering those higher fire officer programs, 7.41 percent require Fire Officer II and 27.4 percent require Fire Officer III

certification for chief officers. Inspector certification is required by 12.3 percent of departments, and fire instructor certification is required by 17.3 percent of those responding. The National Fire Academy's Executive Fire Officer Program is required by 14.8 percent of those departments responding.

Degrees are required by about two-thirds of the responding departments. Associate's degrees are required by 30.9 percent of those responding and 34.6 percent require at least a Bachelor's degree. A Master's degree is required for 3.7 percent of those responding departments, and 4.94 require something other than the degrees listed.

Personal qualifications in most cases were significantly higher than what is required by many departments. Over two-thirds of the responders have degrees of some sort. Many had more than one degree listed in their response. This is the reason that the results show 61.7 percent with Bachelor's degrees and 66.7 percent with Associate's degrees. There were 17.3 percent with Master's degrees, and 1.23 percent responded as having something other than those three types of degrees. The respondents did not specify the other types of degrees.

Fire Officer certification varied by state. As previously stated many Florida respondents stated that Fire Officer I was all that is offered currently there. Fire officer certification is held by 39.5 percent of those who responded. Fire Officer II and III certification is held by 22.2 and 29.6 percent, respectively, of those responding. Over half, 50.6 percent are certified inspectors, 70.4 percent are certified instructors, and 70.6 percent are National Fire Academy Executive Fire Officer Program (EFOP) graduates.

Over half, 50.6 percent of those responding, have changed fire departments during their career. Those changing departments, 19.8 percent, entered the new department at the Fire Chief level, and 9.88 percent entered the new department as Assistant Chief. Others, 22.2 percent,

entered at other ranks or titles. These ranks were not specified in the survey questions.

The internal survey produced some interesting numbers. Seven respondents (20%) had more than 20 years of service. Six had between 10 and 20 years of service, and four had five to ten years of service. All others had five years of service or less. The internal survey did not include those new personnel with no certifications.

At the time the internal survey was distributed, only one individual had basic certification at the Firefighter II level. Until July 2000, "Structural Firefighting" (Course number 1131) was offered by the State of South Carolina in lieu of Firefighter II certification. Twenty personnel have 1131 certification. Only one person has any Fire Officer certifications, that being Fire Officer III. There are nine personnel with fire marshal/inspector certification and two with fire instructor certification.

Four personnel (11.6%) have Associate's degrees and three (8.8%) have Bachelor's degrees. There are no degrees above the Bachelor's level in the department. Several personnel state that they are looking into distance learning programs to obtain degrees. No one in the department has Executive Fire Officer Program (EFOP) certification. The current chief is enrolled in the Executive Fire Officer Program.

Many of those surveyed internally state they plan to get Fire Fighter II and Fire Officer certifications. Two state they would like to attend EFOP at the National Fire Academy.

The survey of fire departments revealed that the qualifications for Fire Chief in Hartsville are similar to those of other departments with qualifications. The City of Hartsville's requirements for Fire Chief are:

## DESIRED MINIMUM QUALIFICATIONS

### Education and Experience:

- a) Graduation from a college or university with a Bachelor's degree in fire science, public administration or closely related field; or
- b) Completion of the National Fire Academy Executive Fire Officer Program; and,
- c) Ten (10) years of continuous Fire Service experience with five (5) years of supervisory experience; and,
- d) Completion of the South Carolina Fire Academy; or,
- e) Any equivalent combination of education and experience which provides the required knowledge, skills and abilities.

### Necessary Knowledge, Skills and Abilities:

- a) Thorough knowledge of modern fire suppression and prevention procedures, techniques, and equipment; considerable knowledge of applicable laws, ordinances, departmental standard operating procedures and regulations.
- b) Skill in the operation of the listed tools and equipment.
- c) Ability to: train and supervise subordinate personnel; perform work requiring good physical condition; communicate effectively orally and in writing; exercise sound judgment in evaluating situations and in making decisions; effectively give and receive verbal and written instructions; establish and maintain effective working relationships with other employees, supervisors and the public (City of Hartsville, 2000).

Research of Fire Service advertisements found that most municipalities require some type of degree for Chief Officer. In *Fire Engineering* magazine (2000), departments in Michigan, Minnesota, and California sought an individual with a Bachelor's degree in business, public administration, or a related field. All seek varying levels of experience in multiple areas of Fire Service operations and administration.

*Fire Chief* magazine's (2000) classified advertisements for Fire Chiefs yielded similar results for fire departments in Arizona, Ohio, Wisconsin, Georgia, and California. All sought Bachelor's degrees, seven or more years of progressive fire experience, and the department in Arizona looked for Executive Fire Officer Program experience.

This information shows a need for fire service management personnel to have varying skills and education to be promoted. Management personnel and those desiring to advance to

those positions must educate themselves to be placed in these positions. They must then continue to educate themselves to stay current with changes in their profession.

Those interested in promotion must take the initiative to seek out training and education as needed or it becomes available. They should not wait for their employer to require education. Kleiman (1994) states that individuals are responsible for their own career advancement. She states " you are the only one who can make things happen over the course of your working life. You are the only one in charge of your career" (p.141).

Individuals should develop a plan for their career and the education necessary to advance within their occupation. They must also work to gain experience within their field, and be aware of changes in their field, as well as changes in the way their organization operates.

Research shows that the members of the Hartsville Fire Department are not at an educational level to compete with those applying for management level positions in other fire departments. While those outside the fire department showed a trend for continuing education, personnel in the Hartsville Fire Department were only obtaining basic fire training training.

Although 20% of Hartsville personnel have college degrees, approximately two thirds of those outside respondents had college degrees. No Hartsville fire personnel have Executive Fire Officer Program certification, and externally over 70 percent are EFOP graduates. The majority of Hartsville fire personnel would not meet the minimum qualifications to apply for the fire chief's position, should it become available.

There is currently a lack of officer training in the fire department, with only the current fire chief having fire officer certification. Outside respondents were certified at the Fire Officer I (39.5%), II (22.2%), or III (29.6%) level. Hartsville has two certified instructors versus 70.4 percent of outside respondents being certified. Nine Hartsville personnel (34 %) are inspector

certified, while 50.6 percent of those outside respondents were inspector certified. It would appear that the majority of those surveyed, who have attained chief ranks, have a training background.

Most Hartsville Fire Department personnel are not staying current with changes in the fire service as recommended by Kleiman (1994) or Craig (1987). Although some personnel have indicated a desire to pursue higher education and training in the future, most personnel lack computer skills, other than basic word processing and fire reporting abilities.

Six personnel have attended classes at the National Fire Academy since 1998. There were no NFA attendees prior to that. Those who have attended classes have applied to attend other classes in the coming semesters.

Research in executive development shows that individuals seeking to advance must be able to stay current with changes in their industry and organization. Buhs (1998) "the Fire Service saw a need ... to achieve a businesslike approach to public service". The individuals in the external survey seem to have done this in many cases. Hartsville personnel have not grasped the need for this approach to this point. Personnel are not currently seeking to further their education or obtain advanced certifications such as fire officer. Few if any have a plan for their career as Craig (1987) states.

Possible benefits to the community include enhanced overall service and an increased sense of community safety and security. Specific benefits might include reduction in the loss of life, reduction of property and material damage, reduction in Insurance Services Office (ISO) rating and the accompanying reduction in insurance costs to the community.

As personnel broaden their knowledge, they develop ideas to improve department efficiency and operational safety. As the fire department's level of service increases, so does the quality of life for the residents of Hartsville.

Fire Department personnel who are recognizing career goals, planning for advancement, and working to remain proficient in their abilities will be providing the citizens a better, more efficient service. A better trained and educated fire department is the key to providing quality service to the community.

## **DISCUSSION**

Those in the Hartsville Fire Department that wish to be promoted to Chief Officer positions must consider themselves as executives and as management personnel. Fire Service personnel who desire to advance to chief officer positions must educate themselves not only in fire strategies and tactics, but also in business and management strategies. They must seek and obtain higher education degrees.

As Buhs (1998) states, "...the Fire Service becomes more businesslike..." (p. 56). He further states, "In keeping up with reinvented government, the Fire Service saw a need ... to achieve a businesslike approach to public service" (p. 57). The principles used by private business to educate individuals for advancement to upper management can apply to the Fire Department.

Craig (1987) states executive development is "the process by which individuals increase their understanding and knowledge, and/or improve their skills and abilities, to perform better in their current positions or to prepare themselves for a position to which they can realistically aspire in the near future" (p. 37). Hartsville personnel must use this information and prepare

themselves for future promotion.

Fire Chiefs and higher ranking non-shift fire officials should be educated much the same as upper management in any other successful private organization. Both are expected to manage their respective organizations. Therefore, Fire Chiefs should be considered executives.

As Kleiman (1994) states, "...college education and a degree are a must for individuals to advance in their chosen field" (p. 185). Those aspiring to advance in the Fire Service must have a degree, since more municipalities are looking for degrees other than fire science. (*Fire Engineering*, 2000). Management training is becoming much more in demand, and must be part of a degree program (Kleiman, 1994, p. 85).

Fire departments must allow people within the organization to grow. A fire department that does not encourage growth in individuals, is an organization that cannot progress, nor meet the needs of the community effectively over the long term.

In following Mascenik (2000) and the City of Brea, the City of Hartsville currently encourages its personnel to better educate themselves. They provide up to \$800 per semester for tuition and books for any employee as long as they can show pertinence to their job. Few Hartsville Fire Department personnel have taken advantage of this benefit.

Individuals within the Fire Department should seek opportunities to experience new and different ideas. By attending the many conferences and seminars offered throughout the year, these individuals can broaden their horizons and bring new and fresh ideas to the home organization. Attending classes at the National Fire Academy is another excellent method for both networking and exposure to other ideas.

Seminars and conferences are good places to expand one's network of peers. The importance of networking cannot be overstated. A good network of peers is important to an

individual's success in advancement throughout a career. Hartsville Fire Department personnel must avail themselves to these opportunities if they wish to advance in the department.

There are many methods for obtaining a degree. Distance learning is an excellent way to get a degree and to increase formal education without having to attend campus based classes. Additionally, the fire department must offer training on a regular basis to improve technical skills, and to introduce personnel to new skills.

Each individual in the fire department should be responsible for their own progress and education. As Smith (1995) states, "no one - not boss, not a subordinate, not a supplier, not a customer- can take responsibility for another person's behavior change" (p. 3). There will always be those in an organization that refuse to change or advance. However, the majority will hopefully see the advantages education and personal growth provide in benefiting themselves, the organization, and the community they serve.

In comparing the qualifications of the individuals responding from outside the Hartsville Fire Department with those within it, it is evident that there is a vast gap in training and education. Individuals within the Hartsville Fire Department lag far behind their external counterparts.

For Hartsville personnel to qualify for fire chief, they must obtain degrees, as well as seek and obtain advanced certifications. They do not seem willing to take classes on their own time, even though the department will pay tuition or class registration expenses.

Few Hartsville personnel have plans to further their career. In answering the survey, seven showed a desire to attain Fire Fighter II and Fire Officer I certification, and five expressed a desire for Fire Officer II and III training. Two individuals stated they would pursue Fire Marshal, Fire Instructor, the Executive Fire Officer Program, and an Associate's degree. Three individuals

stated they would pursue a Bachelor's degree.

If the individuals within the Department truly wish to advance either with Hartsville or elsewhere, it is imperative that they get advanced training. They must work for a degree and certification as a Fire Officer. This is a bare minimum as it is apparent that municipalities desire these items. They must be willing to do this with or without assistance from the City.

Both Kleiman (1994) and Craig (1987) document the need to plan one's career. Kleiman (1994) says that individuals are responsible for their own career advancement. "You are the only one who can make things happen over the course of your working life. You are the only one in charge of your career" (Kleiman, 1994, p. 141). Each employee for Hartsville Fire Department must be responsible for their career planning and advancement.

Craig (1987) recommends steps to fulfill a career plan. His seven-step process is simple and easily followed. He recommends keeping the plan basic, limiting objectives, and trying to accomplish two or three goals at a time. One goal of the two or three should be easy to attain. That one goal should also include an action that can be taken immediately. Doing something as simple as reading a book or attending a seminar would be two examples of immediate actions.

Avoiding supervisor approval when appropriate may speed up the process. Taking actions that can be personally controlled promotes a more rapid pace in moving ahead. Looking for job opportunities is part of the Craig (1987) process. Peer feedback is another step that is easy to accomplish. Finally, use benchmarks to chart progress in fulfilling a career plan.

Craig's (1987) planning steps make career advancement easier. All firefighters should develop a career plan, even if they wish to remain firefighters throughout their career. Individuals should be able to adapt and change as the Fire Service changes and grows. Kleiman's (1994) earlier statement, "... you are the only one who can make things happen over the course

of your working life. You are the only one in charge of your career" (p. 141) reinforces this.

The Fire Service has seen much change in the past 30 years. The introduction of EMS, hazardous materials response, terrorism response, confined space response, and high angle rescue response are just some of the changes that have affected the Fire Service.

The Fire Service has also experienced many technological changes. The use of computers is an example of technological advancement. We now have computers in fire apparatus as well as in fire stations. Kleiman (1994) states that, "Staying on the edge of computer technology is a lifelong must for managers" (p. 87). Every fire officer should be computer literate, and strive to stay on the cutting edge of computer technology.

Those desiring promotion in the Fire Service must get as much post-secondary education as possible. With more universities and colleges offering distance learning programs, it is now easier to obtain degrees. Colleges are currently offering Master's degrees through distance learning and over the Internet. For those who work on the typical "24 on/48 off" shift and have difficulty attending classes on a rigid schedule, these are accessible degree programs.

Management training must be an integral part of any degree, whether it's a Fire Science degree or not. As Kleiman (1994) states, "Management courses are an important part of any degree program, and continuing management training should be pursued throughout a person's career" (p. 85). Continuing management training throughout a career causes an incremental broadening in management background and techniques.

Carter (2000) suggests that Fire Chiefs of the future, "...become computer literate; attend various local, county, state, and national seminars; build a library; join professional associations; commit time to the National Fire Academy; train regularly; broaden your administrative skills;

and learn about laws that impact upon our daily operations" (p. 68). Those seeking career advancement should include all of the above items in an overall plan.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

The members of the Hartsville Fire Department must consider the disparity between their existing qualifications and those of people outside the organization if they wish to advance in the organization. They should begin by planning their personal career strategy. This is the method that is suggested by many of the references previously cited.

Each individual should consider the career path that they wish to follow, whether that is remaining a firefighter, moving to the company officer level or to the chief officer level. Next, the individual should develop an appropriate career plan. It is important to set career goals and outline methods to achieve those goals. After the initial goals are established, the fire fighter should look ahead at the qualifications for the next rank they wish to attain. Once those requirements are recognized, it is easier to plan advancement to that rank. This type of planning should continue until retirement from the Fire Service.

Each individual upon entering the Department should develop a career plan. The plan should include Fire Officer certification, Fire Instructor certification, and a degree. The individual should also plan to attend seminars and conferences, with a goal of at least one per year.

The plan should include both City sponsored and/or paid classes, as well as those paid for by the individual. The plan should include obtaining as many additional Fire Service certifications as are available from the State or other nationally recognized organization.

A new fire fighter's plan should be:

Goal: To advance to company officer (lieutenant)

#### 1<sup>st</sup> Year

- Class - Pump Operations (1220)
- Class - Emergency Vehicle Driver Training (1210)
- Attend one seminar

#### 2<sup>nd</sup> Year

- Class - Structural Burn Refresher (1135)
- Class Hazardous Materials Technician (2735)
- Attend one seminar
- Enroll in a college degree program

#### 3<sup>rd</sup> Year

- Class - Fire Officer I (2100)
- Class - Incident Command System (2137)
- Class - Haz Mat Technician Refresher (2719)
- One college class per semester (up to four per year)
- Attend one seminar

#### 4<sup>th</sup> Year

- Class - Supervision: Personal Effectiveness (2113)
- Class - Intro to Fire Inspection Principles and Practices (2139)
- One college class per semester (up to four per year)
- Attend one seminar

### 5<sup>th</sup> Year

- Class - Instructor Methodology(4161)
- Class - Leadership I: Company Success
- One college class per semester (up to four per year)
- Attend one seminar

The above is a five year plan for a new fire fighter using class numbers for the South Carolina Fire Academy courses. This plan includes the minimum classes and certifications to prepare for advancement.

As the person advances upward in rank, the classes taken should slowly change from tactics courses to those concentrating on management and leadership.

A fire officer with several years of service, who is seeking to advance further in the Hartsville Fire Department, should have a Bachelor's degree. Their plan would be as follows:

Goal: To advance to the rank of assistant chief or chief.

### 1<sup>st</sup> Year

- Enroll in the Executive Fire Officer Program (EFOP)at the National Fire Academy
- Class – Shaping the Future (2176)
- Attend one conference (i.e. Fire Rescue International)
- Attend one Seminar

### 2<sup>nd</sup> Year

- Attend 2<sup>nd</sup> year of EFOP
- Attend one conference
- Attend on seminar

### 3<sup>rd</sup> Year

- Class – 3<sup>rd</sup> year of EFOP
- Attend one conference
- Attend one seminar

### 4<sup>th</sup> Year

- Class - 4<sup>th</sup> year of EFOP
- Attend one conference
- Attend one seminar

### 5<sup>th</sup> Year

- Class - Any management class at the National Fire Academy
- Attend one conference
- Attend one seminar

This plan is the minimum that a person should be accomplishing each year to ready themselves for promotion to upper ranks. Following the plans outlined above should place personnel in a good position to compete with persons from outside the organization.

It is evident that career advancement requires an individual's willingness to devote time to education. Hartsville Fire Department personnel must sacrifice personal time to appropriate activities, such as reading. Individuals should read Fire Service periodicals on a regular basis. Books on Fire Service strategies, tactics, and personnel and business management are also a must.

It is necessary to work toward or possess a Bachelor's degree. Those with a Bachelor's degree should continue on for a Master's degree. At the very least, personnel should consider taking at least one class per year to stay current with change in the Fire Service. Classes in management, computers, and other business applications should be given a high priority. The

City pays up to \$800 per semester for class tuition and books, which is an advantage for personnel. Personnel must take advantage of this benefit if they wish to be competitive in promotional processes.

It should be understood that a plan that is five years in length, remains five years in length. As one year is completed and eliminated from the written plan, another year is added to the plan. As the plan's goal is achieved, the goal will change and be updated along with any changes to the written plan. As with any planning, the career plan should be flexible and dynamic. It should be changed as the individual advances or changes focus within their career.

At a minimum, fire department personnel seeking career advancement should look at the advice of Harry Carter (2000). They should become computer literate, attend seminars, build a personal library of books and periodical articles, join professional organizations, attend classes at the National Fire Academy, train to keep skills proficient, broaden administrative skills, and learn about the laws that affect the Fire Service. They must have a network of peers to seek advice and counsel from.

The Citizens of Hartsville should receive the best emergency service possible. For the Fire Department to provide top quality service, personnel require continuous training. This includes opportunities for honing basic firefighting skills, and for management and leadership training, especially for the officers of the Fire Department.

As personnel within the department improve their level of education and training, the quality of service to the community will improve. As the quality of service improves, so should the quality of life within the community.

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**Appendix A**  
**Letter Sent with External Survey**

June 7, 2000

Dear Chief:

I am the Fire Chief with the Hartsville Fire Department in South Carolina, and an Executive Fire Officer Program student at the National Fire Academy. To fulfill a requirement for that program, and to develop a program for my department, I am conducting research regarding career development for officers, especially those attempting to promote to chief officer positions.

The positions I am most interested in are those at the executive level. Generally, this would be positions that do not routinely respond to an emergency, but rather division heads. This could be chief of department, or an assistant or deputy chief. Essentially they should be responsible for more than a battalion and/or be considered exempt under the Fair Labor Standards Act.

The City of Hartsville advertises nationally to fill all exempt fire department positions. This appears to place many Hartsville Fire Department personnel at a disadvantage. In order to allow these personnel to compete with those outside of the organization, it is important to know what others are doing to prepare for these positions.

To accomplish this, I am asking that you or an individual in your department who is upwardly mobile within the organization, fill out the attached survey. More than one person filling this out is acceptable, if you would like to make copies. If you have an individual who came from outside your organization, this person would be an excellent candidate for the survey.

Please return the survey in self addressed, stamped envelope **no later than July 10, 2000**. If you wish to contact me via telephone, fax, or e-mail, those numbers are listed below.

Thank you for taking the time to complete this survey.

Sincerely,

Larry Morabito  
Fire Chief

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