

EVALUATIONS, A TALE OF LOVE AND HATE

STRATEGIC MANAGEMENT OF CHANGE

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ABSTRACT

The City of Lebanon (New Hampshire) Fire Department had no formal process of evaluation for personnel. Although required by city policy and collective bargaining, employee performance evaluations were mostly overlooked by city management and the department. The only department evaluations conducted were for newly hired or promoted personnel to confirm successful completion of their probationary period. The problem prompting this research was the lack of a formal evaluation process for Lebanon Fire Department.

The purpose of this research project was to conduct an analysis of the need for a personnel evaluation system for Lebanon Fire Department and establish a plan to implement such a system. Research was conducted using historical, descriptive and action research methodologies. Human Resource, Fire Service, Lebanon Fire Department, Internet and interview sources were utilized; (a) to find out why there was no system of evaluation in place at the Lebanon Fire Department, (b) to prove or disprove the need for an evaluation system for Lebanon Fire Department, and (c) to determine the best way to integrate an evaluation system into the Lebanon Fire Department culture, if the need existed.

Historical research was used to establish the reason that evaluations were not currently conducted by Lebanon Fire Department. Descriptive research employing the Analysis Phase of the Change Management Model in the National Fire Academy course, Strategic Management of Change, was utilized to determine the necessity for a department evaluation system. Literature reviews of both pro and con viewpoints from public sector, private sector, fire service, and human resource disciplines were conducted on the topic of employee evaluations. The literature search was supplemented by interviews of Human Resource managers and career department members. Action research was used

to identify the methodology for integrating a system into the culture. This was not accomplished completely but to the point of selecting the composition of personnel to develop the change vision.

From this research it was determined that lack of support from City Hall prevented a system from being installed in the past. The need for an evaluation system was determined. The driving reason for this determination was that sooner or later an external force would require one. The best way to integrate an evaluation system into the Lebanon Fire Department culture was determined to be by participative construction with all levels of the department. It was estimated that the implementation would take place over a three to five year period. It was determined that the system should be placed in service as a complete package rather than piecemeal.

The cruel reality of evaluation systems is that while it seems no one outside of the Human Resource discipline likes them in general, everybody seems to want them. While there was little internal pressure for change, external stimulus was already present. The issue was not if Lebanon Fire Department would have an evaluation system, but rather when the department would have one and who would develop it.

If we are to have a system, then Lebanon Fire Department should build it, implement it, and be allowed to let it evolve. The political and management forces above must support any system in all aspects in order for it to be effective. If a high level of commitment and support from the City Manager and department management cannot be assured, the process should not be even attempted, for it is doomed.

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INTRODUCTION

The City of Lebanon (New Hampshire) Fire Department has no formal process of evaluation for personnel. Although a requirement by city policy and collective bargaining, employee performance evaluations had been largely overlooked by city management and the fire department. The only fire department evaluations conducted were for newly hired or promoted personnel to confirm successful completion of their probationary period. The problem prompting this research was the lack of a formal evaluation process for Lebanon Fire Department.

The purpose of this research project was to conduct an analysis of the need for a personnel evaluation system for Lebanon Fire Department and establish a plan to implement such a system, if needed. Research was conducted using historical, descriptive and action research methodologies. Human Resource, Fire Service, Lebanon Fire Department, Internet, and interview sources were utilized to answer the following questions:

1. Why was no system of evaluation in place at Lebanon Fire Department?
2. Was there a need for an evaluation system for Lebanon Fire Department?
3. If the need existed for an evaluation system, how would it best be integrated into the Lebanon Fire Department culture?

BACKGROUND AND SIGNIFICANCE

A requirement for employee performance evaluations has existed in both City of Lebanon Policies and Procedures Manual and the labor contract between the City of Lebanon and the Lebanon Professional Firefighters Association, Local 3197 of the International Association of Firefighters at least since 1993 when I joined the department. In spite of this, no formal system of evaluation has been utilized by

Lebanon Fire Department to date. The only evaluative practice utilized in the department during this period was letters generated as confirmation of a probationary firefighter's acceptability at the end of probation and similar letters for step raises. While the requirement existed on paper, the actual enactment of an evaluation system was largely ignored by Lebanon City Managers and City Government in spite of the efforts of the Fire Chief to address the issue. With a stable work force and non-existent personnel turnover, evaluations were not considered an issue. It was felt that as a small group, everyone knew about everyone else and that was sufficient. In October 1997, a captain retired. This retirement resulted in the first promotional opportunities in more than eight years. With the normal emotions and organizational impact that promotions bring, it was mutually agreed by all that upon completion of the process a promotional system would be developed by a management / labor committee for future utilization. Could the development, adoption and implementation of an evaluation system be useful to not only the promotional process but other facets of employee development?

LITERATURE REVIEW

The literature review for this project involved research in three distinct areas. Available historical documents and interviews with current and retired Lebanon Fire Department members were accessed regarding the history of department evaluation system efforts. Books, periodicals, Internet resources and interviews spanning the private and public sector were utilized to obtain a current view of the types, strengths and weaknesses of evaluation systems.

A review of City of Lebanon records was made to establish a history of employee performance evaluation systems in Lebanon. Only two references of any type were found. One reference was from the City of Lebanon Personnel Policies and Procedures Manual, last updated in 1989. Created in

1981, Section 5.2 of the manual entitled “ Performance Evaluations” recognized the need for “an operating performance evaluation system”. This system was to assess employees, encourage development, provide a basis for granting step (merit) increases, inspire employee feedback and “identify training needs” (City of Lebanon Personnel Policies and Procedures Manual, 1989, pg. 10).

The second reference was the inclusion of the same section, verbatim, in the current Agreement Between the City of Lebanon and the Lebanon Permanent Firefighter’s Association as Article 30 (Agreement Between the City of Lebanon and the Lebanon Permanent Firefighter’s Association, 1998, pg. 30). Contracts as far back as 1981 all had this same article (Captain Gary Johnson, Lebanon Permanent Firefighter’s Association Secretary, personal interview, November 26, 1998)

From personal knowledge, since 1981 there have been four Lebanon Fire Chiefs; Chief Francis Stoddard (1974-1984), Chief Joseph Lariviere (1984-1987), Chief John Shaw (1987-1991), and Chief Stephen Allen (1991-Present). On November 28, 1998 I conducted telephone interviews with all the previous Chiefs. All spoke of the same frustration, the expressed desire on the part of the City to have an evaluation system but the lack of interest, support, and resources from the City Manager. The only evaluation like documents created, according to all of the chiefs, were standard letters written to justify contractually required step increases (Past Lebanon Fire Chiefs, telephone interviews, November 28, 1998). On November 30, I interviewed the current Chief, Stephen Allen, who echoed the same sentiments as his predecessors. Chief Allen proposed a possible explanation for the apparent dichotomy: a high turnover of City Managers and the lack of a Human Resources Director in the City may have precluded the City’s collective attention to evaluation issues. I can well attest to this turnover as there have been four City Managers since I joined the department in 1993. Chief Allen went on

further to say that the current City Manager is a proponent of evaluation systems. The difficulty of enacting, supporting and nurturing an evaluation system was the lack of a City Human Resources person and the finite time available to the City Manager (Chief Allen, personal interview, November 30, 1998).

A review of personnel records on October 21, 1998 revealed that there were at least two attempts at establishing an evaluation process around 1982. Both evaluations found were different in both format and content. It is interesting to note that one of the evaluations stated that the employee was using SCBA too much (Lebanon Fire Department Employee Personnel Records).

With the history of evaluations established, the next task was to explore the validity of evaluations in general and for Lebanon Fire Department in particular. The need for evaluating performance in some manner was found from several perspectives. From the public sector, the International City/County Management Association's reference book: Effective Supervisory Practices 1995 deals with this issue. Chapter 8, written by Harold L. Holtz, answers the question "why evaluate?" from several perspectives. In general, evaluations help employees fully develop their work potential and establish mutually agreeable performance benchmarks. They also remove subjectivity, perceptions of favoritism, and provide a medium for feedback on supervisory performance, according to Holtz. From the perspective of the organizational level, Holtz noted that evaluations were liked because; elected officials believe that evaluations stimulate improved performance, department heads see evaluations as unbiased tools to use in promotions, supervisors want evaluations to motivate employees and finally employees want evaluations because they like to know how they are doing and what lies ahead (ICMA, Holtz, 1995, pg. 91-92).

What if no formal system of evaluation was in place? Holtz presented a case that with or without

an evaluation system, people evaluate other people with potentially poor results.

Even if there were no formal evaluation process, people would continue to evaluate each other's work. The reason is simple. We all size each other in a spontaneous, informal way as part of everyday living. Each person in a group has formed an opinion about the others in the group, without formally evaluating them. But the difficulty is this: If supervisors make decisions on the basis of these informal impressions, they will be wrong most of the time (ICMA, Holtz, 1995, pg. 92).

Holtz further points out that our impressions are frequently wrong because we do not observe carefully as a rule and confuse our values with behavior we see in others. The worst issue in not conducting evaluations is that mistakes made are damaging, difficult to repair and of far reaching impact. "We owe it to others to conduct a careful, formal evaluation of their work" (ICMA, Holtz, 1995, pg. 92).

Narrowing the public sector field to the fire service industry, the same reasons were offered from different views. In an article titled Personnel Evaluations - Are we being effective? The author, Thomas W. Aurnhammer, quoted the reason we evaluate from Dr. Harry Carter's book Management in the Fire Service. According to Dr. Carter we evaluate to; "inform subordinates how they're doing", "give supervisors a more objective method to look at performance", "identify and allow the correction of deficient behaviors" (Fire Chief, 1996, August, pg. 102).

The comparison to the ICMA logic is interesting. In ICMA evaluation reasoning focuses on developing employees, setting agreeable benchmarks, reducing subjectivity and favoritism with the final caveat of feedback on supervisory performance. According to the view adopted by Mr. Aurnhammer,

evaluations tells how it is, measures performance and corrects deficiencies. One appears to nurture for the future, while the other polices the past.

Another fire service view of evaluations came from James Gerspach in his book Employee Performance Evaluations. “The entire purpose of employee performance evaluation is to maximize the effectiveness of the employee”(Gerspach, 1988, pg. 2). He further went on to define the best use an evaluation; “a summation of what the employee and the supervisor already know and understand” (Gerspach, 1988, pg. 7). It appeared that the ten year old fire service vision of evaluations more closely mirrors the 1995 ICMA version.

Looking to the private sector, I had the opportunity to interview two human resource professionals in pursuit of information. On November 7, 1998 I interviewed Daniel Arseneau, Director of Human Resources at South Western Medical Center, Bennington, Vermont. Mr. Arseneau said that “performance evaluation systems should validate what is already known by the evaluators and the employee.” To this he added, “If it is ever a surprise, the system is flawed. The problem is, there are a lot of surprises”. Mr. Arseneau advised that everyone in his industry is continuously looking for the perfect evaluation process. Quite frankly, he said, there is none. The reason is that humans by nature are emotional, not logical creatures. Even with the best tools, the best training and the fairest of standards, the results are never totally objective.

Industry, Mr. Arseneau said, is shifting from the philosophy of the customer being number one to the employee being number one. This is because an employee who improves performance during a tenure, becomes more valuable to the organization. As the value of the employees increase, so does the worth of the organization. When considering the evaluation of an employee, Mr. Arseneau believes in

measuring values instead of skills.

An employee might have tremendous skills but a set of values that are unacceptable to the organization. An employee with values consistent with the organization will develop the skills necessary to be successful because of those values. It just does not work the other way around (Daniel Arseneau, personal interview, November 7, 1998).

Mr. Arseneau broke the components of evaluation into four values; quality of work, empathy towards others, stewardship in the use of resources and teamwork which he defined as “ the art of helping others succeed”. Mr. Arseneau said that in performance evaluation, the form was merely a selected device to present the data compiled in a comparative and measurable format. He advised that performance evaluation was not an appropriate term. “ The real issue is developing a Performance Monitoring System. The system must be composed of measurable criteria, training of evaluators, frequent informal evaluations called coaching, counseling when needed, and formal evaluations at least every six months”(Daniel Arseneau, personal interview, November 7, 1998).

On November 29, 1998 I interviewed Gail Benoit, Human Resources Manager for GW Plastics of Bethel, Vermont. Mrs. Benoit initially commented upon my research: “This is a unique condition, normally management only looks at evaluations when forced to by some external stimulus. The normal process is that Human Resources creates an evaluation system and management abuses it” (Gail Benoit personal interview, November 29, 1998).

Mrs. Benoit preferred the term Employee Development Program (EDP) to evaluations in describing today’s human resource systems as opposed to performance evaluations. When asked why have an Employment Development Program, Mrs. Benoit replied that without a fair system in place,

charges of favoritism, subjectiveness, and vendettas, overshadow any independent effort to develop people. She believes that an Employment Development Program is a development tool, not a compensation device. It requires a lot of time and commitment on the part of all. “While people get uptight with any type of process that might place them in anything less than a perfect light, it should be merely a summary of what is already known by both the employee and the supervisor” (Gail Benoit personal interview, November 29, 1998).

With a number of the reasons for having evaluations, I went looking for reasons against instituting an evaluation system. In the introduction to his book The Complete Guide to Performance Appraisals, Dick Grote wrote, “no one seems satisfied with the system they have or content with the results it produces” (Grote, 1996, pg. ix) In reviewing where we are today with evaluation systems he referenced the writer Ron Zemke who, in 1991, noted that while evaluations are generally accepted as a management tool, there was little evidence that a system actually works. One study on a Management By Objectives (MBO) system revealed that unless strong support from senior management is present, there was no effect on personnel (Grote 1996, pg. 5). Strong support from senior management was put to the test in a Towers Perrin study in 1995:

Nine out of ten senior executives told researchers that people were the company’s most important resource, and 98 percent said improved employee performance would boost the bottom line. No news here. Successful executives know how to parrot the company line. But given the chance to rank the strategies most likely to bring about organizational success, they ranked the two “people issues”- investment in people and people performance- near the bottom. The top three slots were assigned to customer satisfaction, financial performance and product

and service quality. Only quality of marketing was ranked lower than the two people issues (Grote 1996, pg. 13).

In Performance Appraisals: An Overview by Dale Scharinger of the Society for Human Resource Management, Mr. Scharinger commented on the problems inherent to evaluation systems:

The problems which frequently occur under this procedure are: failure to complete the appraisal on time, lack of consistency and objectivity appraising the staff, failure to provide upper management with feedback on staff performance, and a perception that the whole procedure is busy work of little value. Unless upper management actively participates and takes prime responsibility for the appraisal process, the remainder of the staff in the organization is unsure of the value and importance of performance appraisal and top management's true support of it (Scharinger 1996, pg. 1).

Another view came from James Laumeier in his 1997 Society for Human Resource Management White Paper Performance Management Systems: What Do We Want To Accomplish?

Mr. Laumeier balanced what was wrong with these systems against what he felt they could do:

Performance appraisal systems are practiced in most organizations today. The costs, time and effort for U.S. businesses is staggering. Performance Appraisal Systems have few true supporters. Employers have often indicated informally a low level of satisfaction; supervisors often must be coerced to comply. Employees often feel "short changed" or treated unfairly.

While not effective for some significant objectives, performance appraisals are very effective at two critical objectives. First, the documentation of unsatisfactory performances will remain very critical objectives as long as poor performance and review proceedings, e.g. legal system and

arbitration continue to exist. Performance appraisal systems satisfy this requirement very well and have been recognized as effective in the courts and in arbitration proceedings.

Second, many employers elect to design compensation systems which provide for distribution of wage increases based to some extent on performance evaluations. Performance appraisal systems can be designed to result in a "normal distribution" and can serve the objective of a basis for compensation distribution effectively. This paper will not address the issues involved or the debate of the efficacy of such compensation systems (Laumeyer, 1997, pg. 1-2).

I found out in my interviews with Mr. Arseneau and Mrs. Benoit that one of the hottest new trends or components of evaluation systems are counseling and coaching. It seems that there are also problems associated with this latest trend as noted by Steve McKenzie and Mary Shurtleff in their 1996 Society for Human Resource Management White Paper Coaching and Counseling:

Many Managers are not good counselors. Those managers who lack knowledge of the proper counseling process tend to view counseling as having a "heart-to-heart" on one end of the spectrum to telling someone to "shape up or ship out" on the other end of the spectrum. The managers who want to avoid being the "bad guys" may tend to deny that a problem exists or operate from a position of conflict avoidance. In either case, the manager hopes the problem goes away on its own (McKenzie & Shurtleff, 1996, pg. 4).

During the interview with Mrs. Benoit, she said that an evaluation was a tool that must be used correctly.

People must be trained on what, how to, why and the effect. If it is seen as a hassle, a pain or a gotta do it, to do it system, do not have one. To implement a system properly, it will take about

five years to do it right. It can be done wrong much more quickly (Gail Benoit, personal interview, November 29, 1998)!

Gerspach noted that while there are many performance evaluations done, there are few effective ones. To be effective the time, skills and acceptance of confrontation must be recognized and addressed. He further noted: “they seem to work quite well when company officers have been taught how to use them” (Gerspach, 1988, pg. 11).

Over the course of developing this material it became apparent that while no one has a perfect system and no one really likes evaluation / appraisal / employee development or any of the other enlightened names, all agree that something is fairer than nothing.

PROCEDURES

The desired research was to determine; why Lebanon Fire Department employee evaluations were not conducted, if there was a need for such a system, and how to best integrate a system into the Lebanon Fire Department culture. Historical research was used to establish the reason that evaluations were not currently conducted at the department. Interviews were conducted with Lebanon Fire Chiefs from 1974 to present. The questions asked are contained in Appendix A. Descriptive research employing the Analysis Phase of the Change Management Model in the National Fire Academy course Strategic Management of Change was utilized to determine the necessity for a Lebanon Fire Department evaluation system. Literature reviews of both pro and con viewpoints from public sector, private sector, fire service, and human resource disciplines were conducted on the topic of employee evaluations. The literature search was supplemented by interviews of human resource managers and department career members. The questions and responses are contained in Appendix B and C

respectively. The procedures followed are contained in Appendix D. Action research employing the Planning Phase of the Change Management Model as presented in the National Fire Academy course Strategic Management of Change was used to identify the methodology for integrating a system into the culture. This was not accomplished completely but to the point of selecting a composition of personnel to develop the change vision. This was developed through literature review, human resource and department member interviews in a shift environment. The questions asked are contained in Appendix B and C respectively. The procedures followed are contained in Appendix E.

The results of literature review, interviews, and justifications were analyzed in the context of the Analysis and Planning phases referenced above and used as the basis to formulate the answers and recommendations as outlined in the respective section of this document.

Assumptions - Only knowledgeable individuals, experienced in their chosen field authored the written materials that were used in this research. Those who were interviewed or authored written materials were honest in their research and opinions. Interviews with Lebanon Fire Department personnel were more effective than a survey instrument based upon historically poor participation in survey feedback.

Limitations - The research materials and literature analyzed were limited to those obtainable by Internet access and library research. Human resource management interviews were restricted to the immediate New England area purposefully to obtain input consistent with local private sector practices.

Definitions

Coaching - A component of several evaluation systems, coaching deals with the correction or enhancement of employee skills.

Counseling - A companion component to coaching, counseling deals with behavioral issues

Human Resources - The current term for the personnel department.

Management By Objectives (MBO) - A specific evaluation system based upon the establishment of mutually agreeable, achievable goals between a supervisor and employee. The evaluation is based upon the employee attaining the goals.

RESULTS

Research Question 1 - There was no evaluation system in effect for Lebanon Fire Department due to a lack of commitment, desire and resources on the part of the City. Every fire chief since 1974 expressed the same frustration of wanting a system but not receiving any backing or support from the City Manager.

Research Question 2 - A definite need and desire for an evaluation system was determined. The feasibility, type of system and organizational acceptance is in question. The driving reason for this determination is that sooner or later an external force will require one. It is better that we develop a system that is tolerable rather than being given something to live with.

Research Question 3 - With consensus in both interviews and discussions, the best way to integrate an evaluation system into the Lebanon Fire Department culture is by participative construction with all levels of the department represented. It is estimated that the implementation will take from three to five years. The system will be placed in service as a complete package rather than piecemeal. External factors key to the success of the process was the commitment in time, funding, training, department staff and City hall initial and continued focus and support. Without any of these components the system will not work and should not even be attempted.

DISCUSSION

The Lebanon Fire Department in the past had only fleeting glances of any type of formal evaluations. High turn-over at City Hall, the lack of a human resource manager, and the low turn over of department personnel created an environment where evaluations were desirable but not a requirement. No formal, consistent system has existed in the department since 1974. Any attempts to establish a system were quickly thwarted by both internal and external influences, a lack of dedicated time and little if any interest from City Hall. It is my opinion that this lack of City Hall interest is coming to an end. I base this upon the current search for a human resource manager by the City.

The cruel reality of evaluation systems is that while it seems that no one outside of the human resource discipline likes them in general, everybody seems to want them. The one consistent theme heard throughout the research was that system success was in large part based upon strong organizational commitment, support, financing and time. This support must not only be for the initial start-up but for the maintenance and evolution of the system. An example of this can be found in Hartford Vermont. The purpose for the research project conducted by Chief Wood was to improve the existing evaluation system utilized by Hartford Emergency Services. A key component of his process was the Town Manager supporting the research project and allowing it to be utilized. (Wood, 1997) I firmly believe that the success of his project of evolving an evaluation system and my project of establishing one will be dependent upon support from Lebanon Fire Department leadership and City Hall backing.

Beyond the issue of top down support, the next hurdle is the system, components, procedures and ideologies that make the system work. Most other systems are created and use forms to facilitate

their function. It seems that in the case of performance evaluation systems, the forms have the created systems. Total objectivity is demanded in completing paper exercises that by design are subjective.

We are moved to counsel and coach in a caring nourishing manner but also one void of bias, subjectivity and emotion. For each passionate point of support for a system there was an equally passionate point countering it. No wonder why so many are vexed.

Because of the reputation that evaluation systems have and the belief by many department members that we are too small to have or need a system, there is not a lot of enthusiasm for having one. While there was little internal pressure for change, external stimulus was already present. The issue was not if Lebanon Fire Department should have an evaluation system, we will have one. The true question was when the department would have one and who would be it's author. If the department does not build it, the department would either be directed to create one, or given one to implement. If the department builds the system, it is ours to build upon. If given to the department, the department must live with it. With this in mind and the reality that any system must be organizationally specific in both skill and behavioral issues, the idea of creating a system with in-house resources became palatable.

If we are to have a system Lebanon Fire Department should build it, implement it, and allow it to evolve. Political and management forces above us must support it in all aspects in order for it to be effective. If we cannot get a high level of commitment and support in the area noted, then we should not begin the process at all, for it is doomed.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Meet with the City Manager to obtain his support and commitment for Lebanon Fire Department to develop an evaluation system for the department. If we receive his backing, we should

proceed. If we do not receive his backing, we should go no further.

2. If we are proceeding, hold a department meeting to explain the path we are taking, the reasons for it and the benefits expected. Follow this meeting with smaller informal sessions and make copies of this project available.

3. Follow the Planning Phase of the Change Management Model as created in Appendix E.

4. Complete the balance of the process based using the Change Management Model.

5. Support the efforts of the committee. Help them to succeed through support, commitment, and resources.

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APPENDIX A

Interview Questions for Past and Present Lebanon Fire Chiefs

1. When were you Chief of the department?
2. Was there any type of evaluation system present during your tenure?
3. If there was no system, do you have any idea why not?
4. If there was a system, how long was it in place?
5. If there was a system, was it a useful tool?

APPENDIX B

Human Resource Interview Questions and Results

Separate interviews were conducted with Human Resource Managers Dan Arseneau and Gail Benoit. These interviews focused upon evaluation issues in general and the questions below in particular. Their answers were surprisingly similar with a few exceptions.

Interview Questions and results were as follows:

1. What are the current trends in employee evaluations?

Both were proceeding with plans to move towards a 360 Feedback System, the latest innovation in the HR field. This system combines supervisor, peer, subordinate and customer evaluation on an annual basis supported by coaching and counseling on a more frequent basis, according to them.

2. Is there a need for some type of evaluation system?

Both said yes. It is an accepted methodology incorporated in current HR management. They agreed however, that if we were not ready to commit completely to a system then do not do it. A poor, ineffective system could be worse than none at all.

3. What are some of the problems in evaluation systems?

They noted that there was no perfect system out there. Both noted the failure points for any system as lack of support from senior management, lack of time allocation for system processing, lack of funding, and lack of both initial and on-going training. Subjective input, abuses, aberrations and management by avoidance also reduced system effectiveness.

4. What type of system would you recommend?

While both suggested that any system should be built from within the organization, their system

selection was different. Mr. Arseneau recommended a system built around the 360 Feedback system format. Mrs. Benoit suggested that we construct a system that would fit our needs and culture without the constraints of meeting a particular system format.

5. With no current system existing, how long would it take to establish a useful one in your professional opinion?

The consensus was that it would take between three to five years to institute a system and integrate it properly into Lebanon Fire Department culture. Flexibility should be present, but rushing will not help. As Mrs. Benoit noted “It can be done wrong much more quickly”. (Gail Benoit, personal interview, November 29, 1998)

APPENDIX C

Lebanon Career Member Interview Questions and Results

Interviews were conducted with each of our four shifts. Each shift consists of a Captain, Lieutenant and two firefighters. Majority and minority opinions were noted in the results to provide a total picture of response to the questions. No trends by rank or seniority were noted with the exception that the more senior members viewed this process unanimously as another fad or “bright idea” amongst others that have surfaced and died in the past for a multitude of reasons. One of the most noted causes for misgiving was the continuous change of direction at City Hall with the resultant trickle down to Lebanon Fire Department.

1. What is your view of an evaluation system and its value?

The majority view by far was that an evaluation system was useless. Reasons; being small enough to not need one, the union perspective that so long as the contract is met all is well, and previous experience with evaluations in other departments or disciplines formed the framework of the negative response. A minority view from several of the newer members was that one was long overdue providing it was something that was built in-house, supported, and maintained. One suggestion was that if something had to be established, incorporate the use of an assessment center process to examine behavioral issues and existing company standards* to assess skill issues.

2. In instituting an evaluation system of some type, do we start small and build upon it or build / institute a complete system?

Three of the shifts were in favor of bringing a complete system on board while one shift was emphatic that a simple system that could evolve was the way to proceed. One member commented that

while doing it slowly might be a good thing, it could also get lost, abandoned or de-railed for a multitude of reasons and never come to fruition. All shifts reiterated the question of whether a system was in fact actually needed.

3. How long should the process of implementation take ?

Without exception all members supported a slow implementation. Some to allow the change time to become part of our culture, others because they would be retired by then and not have to deal with it.

* Company Standards are performance based, timed evolutions that assess both individual and team suppressions skills. Company Standards presently exist for SCBA, ground ladder, aerial ladder, master stream, hose, hydrant, pump and equipment familiarity. Future standards are planned for rescue and EMS components.

APPENDIX D

Strategic Management of Change

Analysis Phase Procedures

2. Identify Internal Organizational Conditions Requiring Change

Lebanon Fire Department with 19 career members, is a small department where everyone knows everyone else. In some cases, members knew one another prior to joining the department. While turnover was currently non-existent, over one-half of the department could retire in the next five years. There was a very good work ethic in all areas except station maintenance which was viewed as demeaning for the most part and a necessary evil at best. While quality of service and ethics are high, morale fluctuates because of multiple influences and the lack of quality suppression opportunities. The existing culture of the organization is one of caution and scepticism toward change. Currently, no formal system is in place to formally evaluate members. As members retire, new members joining will probably not be local and not have the in depth knowledge of one another that current members have. As the number of new members increase, the case for an evaluation system could be made.

3. Identify Potential Destabilizing Forces

The singular issue outside the department that may impact the current status quo regarding evaluations was the current efforts to hire a human resource manager for the City of Lebanon. With human resources in place, evaluations will surely follow.

4. Determine Organizational Change Requirements

For the current time, Lebanon Fire Department could function as it has without a formal system in place. In the future however, some type of evaluative system will be needed. It will either be

developed by us or forced upon us under the auspices of a City wide human resources program.

4. Determine the Perspective of Change

If no change is made internally, there is a high expectation that external forces will impose a system developed outside the department. The lack of ownership and development buy-in will create an environment set for failure. A long term solution is required, one that is developed, fined tuned, adopted and becomes part of the culture. In order for this to happen:

- A transformational change is needed. Developing a new system, a belief in that system and obtaining a high degree of acceptance and support from the department and City Hall was required.
- The pace of change must be gradual to deal with the traditional opposition to change.
- The change process should be developed over a period of time but placed in operation completely and not piecemeal. Historically, some things started were never finished or were superceded.
- The change should occur when conditions within the department are somewhat stable and not in the midst of other changes due to the sensitivity and complexity of the process.
- Behavioral and skill issues must be dealt with in order for any effective system to work. All involved in the process must understand the intent, spirit and value of the selected system. Those receiving and those giving must each understand their roles and impact upon each other.
- Department management, members and City Hall must organizationally and culturally embrace any system and integrate it into all facets of its management.

APPENDIX E

Strategic Management of Change

Planning Phase Procedures

Of the six planning components, only two were addressed in this project. The reasoning for this was two fold. The exact composition of the change was not developed completely, only the identified need for change. The other issue that if true ownership was to take place, the change team must be unhampered and have free rein to function within the Change Management Model for the balance of the process to have a high potential for success.

1. Examine the Forces For and Against Change

In Lebanon Fire Department there are three elements at play. The forces for change lie with a minority of shift personnel, the administrative staff and the actions of the City Manager in attempting to add a human resource manager to his staff. There is a large component that, while skeptical, will look objectively and without prejudice. There is another force of members, some with a reasonable amount of implied power, who will fight this change with all the resources and vigor at their disposal.

2. Select Personnel to Develop a Vision of the Organizational Change

While the model identifies three strategies for personnel selection under the guide of a change manager, I will submit a fourth for use in our process. A chief officer (Executive officer strategy) solely develop this will not allow any type of ownership or buy in on the part of the members. Using a team of chief or line officers (Executive/senior Officer Team Strategy) will increase the buy in but still not cover all aspects of the organization. Using a team of line firefighters (Bottom-up Team Strategy) would provide a broader buy in but might overlook broader issues. My fourth option is to utilize a strategy

that I will call an All Level Strategy. This is a team composed of a nominated member from each level of the organization. This would be the change team for the balance of the planning phase and follow the process to implementation.