

**AN ASSESSMENT OF DECENTRALIZATION AND EMPOWERMENT IN A LARGE  
METROPOLITAN FIRE DEPARTMENT**

**EXECUTIVE LEADERSHIP**

By: Lawrence J. Krokes  
Battalion Chief  
Los Angeles City Fire Department  
Los Angeles, California

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## ABSTRACT

Management styles are constantly changing. In recent literature there has been an emphasis for public service organizations to be managed like those in the private sector. As an outgrowth of this trend, public sector organizations have begun to place emphasis on viewing the public as an important customer.

In order to better understand and react to customer needs, many private and public organizations are decentralizing their operations and empowering people within the organization with more decision-making authority. In 1995 the Los Angeles City Fire Department (LAFD) began this process. The purpose of this research project was to determine how successful this program has been and to develop an understanding of what areas need to be addressed. The study employed an evaluative research methodology.

The survey questions to be answered were:

1. How effective has decentralization been on day-to-day operations within the Department?
2. How effective has empowerment been as it relates to responsiveness to the needs of individual commands?
3. How effective has empowerment been as it relates to responding to the needs of the communities that individual stations serve?
4. Is the concept of decentralization and empowerment clearly understood within the Department?
5. What are some of the operational effects that have resulted from empowerment and decentralization?

A questionnaire was developed and distributed to 39 field Battalion Chiefs. The findings indicated that the community has benefitted from empowerment. However, there are several areas that were not addressed adequately when the program was first instituted. Areas were identified in which to concentrate future efforts in order to guarantee

long-term success.

Recommendations, based on the research, called for the formation of an ad hoc committee, made up of department members at levels within the organization affected by the initial decentralization and empowerment, to help develop ways to improve on the program. Questionnaires should be developed and administered to captains and first-level civilian supervisors within the Department in order to complete the total decentralization and empowerment picture. Additionally, questionnaires should be developed to survey other large metropolitan fire departments, as well as public organizations similar in structure, to acquire and provide insight for successful implementation of this management concept.

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## INTRODUCTION

The Fire Service is traditional, almost by definition. In a time of "down sizing" or "right sizing" in the private sector the expectations from the public toward the Fire Service have changed. This public expectation of more for less from the private sector drives their expectations in the public sector. The public now expects the Fire Service to provide more for less and with fewer resources. As a result, many changes have been imposed on an institution — the Fire Service — that is known for its resistance to change.

In order to institute change, leadership has become more and more important. The Los Angeles City Fire Department is no exception. As part of an effort to meet the needs and demands of the community, the Department instituted a shift in the way and direction of the services the Department provides. The shift has resulted in a Department attuned to the needs of the community and one with an enhanced capability in Emergency Medical Services while still maintaining its fire and/or emergency capability. The Department has attempted to decentralize functions and has, thus, imposed a management style empowering those at lower levels in the organization.

The changes have not come as quickly as one might have expected. Recent literature speaks of downsizing and empowerment as a way in which to become competitive in the market place. However, in any organization, there are other factors that have a significant impact on not only the final outcome but, more importantly, how successfully it is achieved. Whether the business or service is provided in the private or public sector can make a significant difference on how success is realized.

In the Los Angeles City Fire Department this new management style has resulted in frustration and, in some cases, confusion from not only the rank and file but the officers as well. It has impacted individual officers in many ways. While individual leadership styles have become an important ingredient in instituting the changes that have been promulgated down to the service delivery level, there have been factors that have effected

overall success.

The purpose of this research project was to determine the significant factors associated with successful decentralization and empowerment within the Los Angeles City Fire Department. An evaluative methodology was used to answer the following questions:

1. How effective has decentralization been on day-to-day operations within the department?
2. How effective has empowerment been as it relates to responsiveness to the needs of individual commands?
3. How effective has empowerment been as it relates to responding to the needs of the communities that individual stations serve?
4. Is the concept of decentralization and empowerment clearly understood within the Department?
5. What are some of the operational effects as a result of empowerment and decentralization?

## **BACKGROUND AND SIGNIFICANCE**

The Los Angeles City Fire Department is responsible for providing fire and EMS service for an approximately 470 square mile area. The City consists of business, commercial and residential occupancies, as well as a significant amount of brush and native chaparral. The Department is also responsible for providing fire and EMS services for the Port of Los Angeles and Los Angeles International Airport (LAX). Each is the busiest of their type on the West Coast. In order to provide this service the Department staffs 102 fire stations. It consists of approximately 3,345 civilian and uniformed personnel. The current Fiscal Year (1997/98) Operating Budget is \$311 million; of this, approximately ninety percent represents salary (CLA, 1997, p.48).

The Department was formed in 1876 and, like most old departments, is steeped in tradition. It relies on a paramilitary structure not unlike many large fire departments in the country. It is known throughout the nation for its aggressive interior firefighting ability and its innovative approaches at solving complex rescue and firefighting problems.

In 1995, the Department initiated a departure from the traditional way of conducting routine business. A directive was distributed to all members within the organization outlining the first steps of decentralizing functions within the organization (LAFD, 1995). This was the first step toward empowering the officers within the organization and reflected a new direction. Some of the tasks and/or decisions delegated to the first level officers were:

- Requests for time off
- Memorandum used in place of formalized reports
- Approval of supply requisitions
- Time scheduling of certain routine activities
- Approval of apparatus preventive maintenance records
- Notifications of routine and periodic details

Data indicated that approximately 77.6 percent of the incidents that the Department responded to were Emergency Medical Service (EMS) or rescue related. The Department felt that the resources, both equipment and personnel, within the department were not configured or deployed to reflect the proper level of service to adequately address this need. Response goals were established and a redeployment scheme was developed to accomplish them. This plan required a shift in staffing, additional EMS resources and a commitment to enhancing the Department's EMS service delivery while minimizing the impact on the fire and rescue capability. This shift in emphasis was based on what the Department was being called upon to provide to its "customer" and not traditional views. This shift in service is not unique to Los Angeles. Grant and Hoover (1994) find the shift to EMS to be one of two national trends having an effect on the fire service over the coming decade (p.6).

These changes all began while the City was experiencing severe financial difficulties. The Los Angeles City Fire Department, like many large city fire departments, was being asked to do more with less and at a reduced cost. A major impediment in reducing Fire Department costs was a collective bargaining agreement negotiated between the City and the employee bargaining units in September of 1996. The agreement provided a cost of living wage adjustment of 18 percent over a four-year period.

In August of 1996, the Department presented a redeployment plan that emphasized its commitment to enhanced EMS. The plan contained several changes. Among them were reduced staffing on many of its companies, placing displaced personnel on new rescue ambulances, developing a new Advanced Life Support (ALS) capability on several of its engine companies and eliminating several personnel positions. This proposal met fierce opposition from various factions within the Department. It was not until September 4, 1997, when the plan was implemented — but only partially.

In November 1997, the Department added a Department Labor Relations Officer. This position had been removed from the Department's budget earlier that year in July. The position was re-instituted as a result of delays the Department was experiencing in its implementation of the redeployment plan caused by Union negotiations. The Union is the bargaining unit representing the majority of the Department's sworn personnel.

The decentralization and empowerment plan was the first program in the Department's overall shift and commitment to change. Decentralization and empowerment are the key ingredients in the success of the programs that have followed. This applied research project attempts to determine some of the effects that decentralization and empowerment have had on this large metropolitan department. It specifically tries to determine if the goals for instituting this organizational change have been achieved in addition to determining some of the problems that have surfaced as a result. It is directly applicable to the "The Management Process" and "Assessing Organizational Culture" modules in the Executive Leadership course.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

A comment expressed by many is to run government like a business. However, as Osborne and Gaebler (1992) state, "Government and business are fundamentally different institutions. Business leaders are driven by profit motive; government leaders are driven by the desire to get re-elected. Businesses get most of their money from their customers; governments get most of their money from taxpayers" (p.20).

Traditionally speaking the Fire Service has been a public enterprise, operated by and for the benefit of those it serves. However this is not now entirely true. As pointed out by Osborne and Gaebler (1993), there has been a trend for communities to contract to have private companies run their fire departments (p.224). "Competition, not only from private companies but from other local departments that rely on taxpayers for funding, is compelling the fire service to move out of its comfort zone and modify its services to match its community's changing needs" (Cote & Linville, 1997, p.10—5). Grant and Hoover (1994) feel that "the financial future for public providers is uncertain at best. Increased responsibilities and demands for service have been accompanied by a decrease in revenue. The level of revenue available is not likely to increase given the current aversion to tax increases" (p.425).

In support of the concept of treating the public as the customer, Public Broadcasting (Starr & Cram, 1989) looked at several public sector service providers that exhibited excellence in what they were doing. One of these was the Phoenix Fire Department. This department provides a rescue ambulance anywhere in the city of approximately one million residents on the average in five minutes. This is four times better than the private sector. The City of Phoenix has developed a desire within its workforce to run the City as though it were a business. In this way it has developed a competitive spirit to reduce cost and become efficient.

Over the last fifty years one of the changes in most fire departments in the United

States has been its mission. In earlier times the fire service was essentially a combat organization focused on fire suppression operations. This mission has slowly progressed to an overall provider, not just suppression. The addition of emergency medical service (EMS) has changed the complexion of the training and even the type of individuals who seek employment in the fire service (Coleman & Granito, 1988, p.473).

Organizations are typically pyramidal in nature, with management at the top and the employees at the bottom. Management establishes the vision, sets the goals, values and mission. However, for the organization to have any chance for success, this pyramid needs to be inverted since those most responsible to the customer are the employees. In this way management then assumes the role of being responsive to the employees needs for their success (Hesselbein, Goldsmith & Beckhard, 1996, p.85). As Hesselbein, Goldsmith and Beckhard (1997) found, "The only way this can happen is with an empowered workforce where decisions are made at the appropriate level" (p.175).

Literature on organizational change contains a great number of references that focus on the factors that characterize successful companies. Peters and Waterman (1982), after analyzing seventy-five highly regarded companies, found eight attributes that characterized these companies. The American companies lacking these eight attributes "are being stymied not only by their staffs, but also by their structures and systems, both of which inhibit action" (p.17).

In *Thriving on Chaos* (1987), Peters takes these eight attributes further and paints the picture of the successful company of the 1990s and beyond as, among other things, being flatter, producing high value-added services, being service-conscious and more responsive and much faster at innovation (p.27).

Bullock (1995) found in his research that successful organizations have restructured to become more efficient and responsive. These changes were characterized by: an active involvement of personnel in pursuing group goals, ethical leadership, a clear vision,

joint labor and/or management problem solving, a participative management style, effective use of resources, recruiting and developing the right people, fewer management layers, decentralized authority, eliminating unnecessary rules and regulations, and acquiring personnel capable of taking leader-like action (p.17).

In the Fire Service, a classic principle of organization is that the larger and more complex an organization becomes the need for coordination between operational units increases (Cote & Linville, 1997, p.10—8). This principle is reinforced by the need to maintain a chain of command in order to effectively handle emergencies. However, the amount of time spent handling emergencies represents only a small fraction of its activities. This paramilitary emphasis can limit the efficiency and effectiveness of daily operations. While it is in place in most departments, it must be adapted to facilitate routine operations (Grant & Hoover, 1994, p.8).

The definition given by Webster for the term empower is "1. to give power or authority to; authorize. 2. to give ability to; enable; permit" (Guralnik, 1972, p. 459). Goldwater (1995) defines empowerment as "the transfer of power and authority to lower-level managers, supervisors, and personnel" (p.16). This concept of empowering people at lower levels in the organization is currently being used in the private sector as a means of making the organization more responsive to the customer. Hrebiniak (1994) finds that most people view empowerment and the autonomy, responsibility, and trust it implies as positive rewards. These conditions make it possible for managers to try new things without the fear of reprisal. "Thus effective empowerment then facilitates communications and cooperation" (p.100).

Levine (1995) discusses the effects that empowerment has had in the public sector and, in particular, the federal government. He found that in the government's quest to reinvent itself empowerment among the workforce had to be genuine and not merely an opportunity to "spout off". However, he found security to be an underlying issue. If the

ideas generated resulted in layoffs, employees quickly stopped participating (p.159).

As empowerment relates to the Fire Service it is a relatively new concept. Brown (1997) found in his department that "Where modern management calls for decisions to be made at the lowest levels of the organization, in the fire service routine decisions are commonly made at the highest level" (p.iv). "Empowerment is scary, especially for fire service managers schooled only in the para-military paradigm. With empowerment, members will screw up. Firefighters can succeed only when we let them try. A successful chief will treat mistakes as opportunities for learning, rather than occasions for punishment that discourages others" (Fincher, p.18).

Based on a survey of three fire organizations, Pedigo (1994) found that "much of the philosophy and programs can be adapted to the fire service if the organization is willing to make the commitment to do so" (p.10). "The more comfortable and adept a participative leader is with empowering his lower management fire officers, the more likely he or she will be successful" (Kelley, 1995, p.13). However, Bruegman (1991) states that there must be a willingness to relinquish some authority and decision making power to others within the department. He feels that an important part of empowerment is commitment. All chief officers within the department must support the concept (p.89).

Powell (1993) found that the attitudes of the supervisors can play a key role in the process. The perception that power and authority are being removed by allowing employees to make decisions they traditionally made could become a major hurdle to overcome. However, he found that trust and respect can be developed with a clearly defined vision communicated by the leader of the organization (p.13).

The fire service is, by its very nature, a traditional organization. Change comes slowly. Implementation of a management philosophy that is radically different from what is currently in place can face resistance from within the organization. The concept of "if it isn't broken why fix it" permeates throughout the ranks. Hume (1996) found in "most fire

services a strong culture is built up over many years of often hardship and poor management where initiative was stifled and conformance was the norm". This was reflected in their hierarchical structures, chain-of-command and dominance of rank. The need for a paramilitary style organization was reinforced by segmentation stifled innovation, poor teamwork and internal tension (p.15). Yates' (1993) survey of small departments confirmed this need for a paramilitary style in the majority of the departments surveyed (p.8).

Coleman and Granito (1988) suggest that change is frequently resisted by inherent conflicts among the needs of organizations, individuals, professions, and society as a whole. Organizational needs for change may threaten an individual's job security or an individual's need for growth and change may be incompatible with the organization's need for stability and continuity (p.470).

The fire service has traditionally focused on the team concept. McLerran (1992) found that the practice of empowerment fostered a belief in an individual's own power and ability to accomplish goals and thus developed an effective follower (p.17). He further determined that effective followers "participate in a team effort toward accomplishment of organizational goals" (p.16).

For empowerment to succeed a paradigm shift is needed. The traditional way of doing business has to give way to new and innovative ways where decisions are made at lower levels within the organization. In order to be successful, supervisors within the organization have to consider and educate its employees (Fincher, 1993,p.18). To this end, diversity in the workforce needs to be acknowledged and dealt with appropriately.

Diversity has become a major factor in the workforce today. Firefighters now come from many different ethnic backgrounds and now include women as well as men (Fincher, 1993, p.18). Ward (1994), as a result of his recruit training experiences, characterizes the new workforce as "the most diverse and challenging group of firefighter candidates that

any agency or volunteer organization has encountered since Woodstock" (p.14).

Bruegman (1991) finds that this will impact the fire service as a challenge to the traditional organizational structures and values (p.89).

As a semi-military organization, the fire service has traditionally relied on chain of command and discipline to carry out its mission. Dean (1973) found in the Navy that there has been a tendency for officers to go directly to individuals at lower levels in the organization for the sake of expediency. In so doing those in the intermediate ranks are overlooked. The end result was the loss of accountability within these ranks and a deterioration of discipline. The fire service needs to consider this if it is to successfully implement decentralization and empowerment. Grant & Hoover (1994) feel that, "fire departments must recognize that they perform a wide range of operational activities requiring a variety of leadership styles and administrative skills. The strict paramilitary structure must bend to allow progressive management practices to emerge" (p.9).

Cote and Linville (1997) find that rules and regulations are needed in the fire service due to the hazardous nature of many of the activities performed, as well as a clear understanding of expected performance (p.10—10). The fire service must find a delicate balance between its traditional disciplinary methods and what is required to encourage the empowerment process. In order to achieve success Fincher (1993) states that to be successful one needs to "treat mistakes as opportunities for learning, rather than occasions for punishment that discourage others" (p.18).

## PROCEDURES

The research project used a voluntary questionnaire distributed to Battalion Chiefs assigned to field assignments. In the Los Angeles City Fire Department a Battalion Chief is responsible for a geographical area that consists of between five and nine fire stations. They supervise, for the most part, the Department's Suppression and EMS delivery service. These Chief Officers work a three platoon (24-hour shift) schedule in any of 16 battalions. As a result of personnel shortages during the time the questionnaire was distributed, only 39 officers were polled.

Field Battalion Chiefs were selected as the polling population since they are the direct supervisors of fire company officers. The company officer is the first level supervisor in the Department's structure and the group most affected by decentralization and empowerment. It was assumed that these 39 Battalion Chiefs were the best judge of the effects that decentralization and empowerment have on the organization.

An anonymous two-page questionnaire was distributed to the 39 Battalion Chiefs. The questionnaire was designed to solicit input on the project questions to be answered. An anonymous mail-in questionnaire was selected over a telephone questionnaire in order to obtain candid and unbiased answers and to foster a better questionnaire return ratio.

Questionnaires were distributed and returned through Department mail. Those polled had approximately one week to complete and return the questionnaire. A copy of the questionnaire is included as Appendix A.

For analysis purposes, the survey results were entered into a computerized database using Microsoft Excel 4.0. All data was entered as it appeared on the returned questionnaire with few exceptions. On several questionnaires those polled neglected to follow instructions. As such, those particular questions were not recorded in the database. Due to the structure of the questions, this lack of data did not adversely bias the final results. In other cases, respondents failed to answer portions of various questions. Only

those portions answered were entered. This, too, did not bias the final results.

## RESULTS

Twenty-six of the 39 questionnaires were returned (67.0%). Data from the questionnaires was tabulated and included in Appendix B as Tables B1 through B6. The following is an overview of these results.

Only two of the 26 (7.8%) that responded indicated any overall effectiveness of decentralization on day-to-day operations. Two (7.8%) were ambivalent and 22 (84.6%) tended toward seeing no effect on day-to-day operations.

Two (7.8%) indicated there was some effectiveness of empowerment on the responsiveness to the needs of the individual commands. Five (19.2%) were neutral in regards to this issue, while 19 (73.1%) leaned toward rating the effectiveness of empowerment in this area as having no effect.

Eight (30.8%) saw a positive impact, created by empowerment, for stations to respond to the needs of the communities they serve. Five respondents (19.2%) were neutral in this area and 13 (50%) tended toward seeing no effect (Table B1).

When the chief officers were asked if they felt there was a clear understanding by the first level officers at exactly what level they could make decisions, 88.5 percent, 23 of the 26, felt there was not. Twenty-one of the 26 chief officers (80.8%) felt that decentralization and empowerment had been taken beyond what was originally expected (Table B2).

Four (15.4%) of the chief officers felt that they were more informed now on activities occurring within their battalions than before decentralization and empowerment were implemented. However, ten (38.5%) felt less informed. Twelve (46.2%) felt there was no change (Table B3).

In order to determine some of the operational effects that decentralization and empowerment has had on the organization, four questions were posed. Question seven looked at the effect on the chain-of-command. Four (15.4%) saw an improvement in this area. Six (23.1%) saw no change and 15 (57.7%) saw a degradation. One respondent did not answer the question. Question eight looked at the impact on accountability. Three (11.5%) saw some increase in accountability; 12 (46.1%) saw no change. Ten (38.5%) saw some decrease. One respondent gave no answer. Question nine examined the effect on initiating disciplinary action. Eighteen (69.2%) found no change in initiating discipline. However, eight (30.8%) felt there was an adverse impact on initiating it. None of the respondents felt that decentralization and empowerment improved the ability to initiate discipline. Question ten asked if consistency between stations within the battalion was being affected. None of the respondents felt that consistency was increased. Eleven (42.3%) felt there was no change and 15 (57.7%) saw some decrease in consistency (Table B4).

The respondents were asked to list one additional area in which they saw a positive and negative effect (Questions 11 and 12). Of the 26 that responded to the questionnaire, twelve (46.2%) either did not answer or indicated that there was no positive effect. Four (15.4%) either did not answer or indicated that there was no negative effect.

Table B5 tabulates additional positive effects decentralization and empowerment have had on the organization. Several of those that responded to the questionnaire provided similar observations. Table B6 tabulates negative effects on the organization. Again several respondents have provided similar observations.

## DISCUSSION

The number of voluntary responses to the survey (67%) indicates that the information obtained has validity. Erdos (1970) indicates that "no mail survey can be considered reliable unless it has a minimum of 50 percent response, or unless it demonstrates with some form of verification that the non-respondents are similar to the respondents" (p. 144).

The field Battalion Chiefs have an average job tenure of over 27 years. The answers to the questionnaire could have been biased by this factor. Moreover, how this factored into the questionnaire return ratio is unknown. The questionnaire did not attempt to correlate this with the answers that were provided. Table 1 shows the tenure distribution of those polled.

Table 1

### Surveyed Member's Job Tenure

JOB TENURE	NUMBER OF CHIEFS
Less than 20 years	2
20 years but less than 25	17
25 years but less than 30	8
30 years but less than 35	7
35 years but less than 40	4
40 years or more	1
Average Job Tenure = 27.24 years	

The survey results indicate that decentralization and empowerment have had very

little effect on the day-to-day operations. This is echoed by several of the negative effects provided by the respondents. Their remarks indicate a perception that little has changed within the organization and a feeling of a lack of commitment to the concept.

The results indicated that empowerment has had only a minor effect on the responsiveness to the needs of individual commands. An area that appears to have had a noticeable effect from empowerment is in the individual stations being more responsive to the needs of the communities they serve. This was an area which was addressed as a goal in the original departmental directive and appears to have achieved some success.

The survey indicated that clearer definition needs to be provided to the officers regarding their decision-making authority. There appears to be a large perception by chief officers (88.5%) that there is a significant amount of confusion by lower level officers in this area.

It appears from the survey results that chain-of-command and accountability are areas that need continued monitoring. There was a significant response (42.3%) indicating that chain-of-command has declined and a trend for accountability to decline with 38.4 percent of the respondents feeling some decline was evident. Trends in these areas should be of concern since emergency operations in the fire service hinges on paramilitary organization.

Consistency within the command and the ability to initiate discipline are areas that have, for the most part, either remained intact or declined significantly. This could have a significant impact on an organization as large as the LAFD.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

The survey results clearly indicate the need for additional direction and added commitment if decentralization and empowerment are to be successful within the Department. However, the results did show a success in bringing the fire stations closer to the community which was an initial goal of the program. The perception of lack of commitment by the Department to this management style needs to be addressed.

An ad hoc committee should be established to address the issues at a grass roots level in order to look at areas that can be included in the decentralization and empowerment process. There appears to be a willingness within the organization to embrace this management style. This willingness needs to be reinforced to assure ultimate success.

As those closest to the Department's first level supervisors, field Battalion Chiefs were polled in order to determine what effects decentralization and empowerment has had on the Department. A second questionnaire needs to be developed and circulated among a representative sample of the first level officers to solicit their reaction in this area. Perhaps an additional questionnaire, focused on the Department's civilian supervisory staff, should also be considered. Empowerment and decentralization effects these members as well. Their needs are often overlooked in an organization as large as the LAFD, especially when the majority of the Department's personnel are uniformed.

The results of this project identified areas for improvement and further investigation within the Department. The concept of empowerment and decentralization can be applied to other large departments. It is recommended that other large metropolitan fire departments be polled to determine if they have instituted some form of decentralization and/or empowerment and the effects it has had on their organization. There is much that can be learned from the experience of others. Irrespective of the outcome, the results from this project could be provided as an aid or resource should they decide to implement such

a program.

Additionally, it is recommended that other large public service agencies with similar structures be surveyed to determine if, within their organization, they have attempted some form of empowerment or decentralization. This could include such law enforcement agencies as large city police and sheriff departments, in addition to state police and highway patrol departments. Federal agencies, such as the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) and Secret Service, could also be considered. Perhaps the results from these surveys could be applied to the Department or fire service in general.

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**APPENDIX A**

**Decentralization/Empowerment Questionnaire**

## DECENTRALIZATION/EMPOWERMENT QUESTIONNAIRE

I am conducting a survey as part of an applied research project for an Executive Leadership class at the National Fire Academy (NFA). I am only distributing this questionnaire to field Battalion Chiefs. It is my sense that you are the closest to the current changes and their effect on the Department. The questionnaire is anonymous; please do not write your name on it. This project has nothing to do with my present position as the Employee Relations Officer; the results will only be used to fulfill my project requirement. I have to submit my paper by the end of January, so it's important that you take the time to complete the questionnaire and return it as soon as possible. I have provided a self-addressed envelope in which to return the questionnaire via Department mail. Again, I am fighting a time deadline and need these back by January 20, 1998. Your responses **are** important.

If you would like a copy of the completed paper, I will be happy to forward one to you. Just send a memo under a separate mailing and I will get one to you after the project is submitted at the end of this month.

The purpose of this questionnaire is to determine some of the effects decentralization and empowerment have had on this, a large metropolitan, Department.

In July of 1995, the Department began a program to shift responsibility to lower level supervisors in the organization. In doing so a decentralization of authority was instituted. Supervisors and managers at all levels within our organization were given broader responsibilities and greater decision-making ability. In essence the empowerment process was put in place for individuals in supervisory positions to be more responsive to the needs of their command and the community.

Use the above as background, for the following questions.

Answer Questions 1 through 3 using a scale from 1 to 5; the Number 5 indicating "very effective" and 1 indicating "no effect".

1. How would you rate the overall effectiveness of decentralization on day-to-day operations? \_\_\_\_\_
2. How would you rate the effectiveness of empowerment as it relates to being more responsive to the needs of the individual commands? \_\_\_\_\_
3. How would you rate the effectiveness of empowerment as it relates to being more responsive to the needs of the communities that individual stations serve?  
\_\_\_\_\_

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4. Do you feel that there is a clear understanding by the officers in the field at exactly what level they can make decisions?
- a. Yes \_\_\_\_\_
- b. No. \_\_\_\_\_
5. Do you feel that field officers have taken decentralization and empowerment beyond what was originally expected?
- a. Yes \_\_\_\_\_
- b. No \_\_\_\_\_
6. As a result of decentralization and empowerment, which of the following applies regarding how well informed you are on the activities that are occurring within you command?
- a. More informed \_\_\_\_\_
- b. Less informed \_\_\_\_\_
- c. No change \_\_\_\_\_

Answer Questions 7 through 10 using a scale from 1 to 5; the Number 5 indicating "improved", 1 indicating "declined"; 3 would indicate "not changed".

7. How has chain-of-command been impacted by decentralization and empowerment?  
\_\_\_\_\_
8. How has accountability been affected by decentralization and empowerment? \_\_\_\_\_
9. How has the ability to initiate discipline been affected by decentralization and empowerment? \_\_\_\_\_
10. How has consistency within your Battalion been affected by decentralization and empowerment? \_\_\_\_\_
11. List one area, not mentioned in questions 7 through 10 that you feel has been positively affected by the decentralization and empowerment.  
\_\_\_\_\_
12. List one area not mentioned in questions 7 through 10 that you feel has been negatively affected by the decentralization and empowerment.  
\_\_\_\_\_

**APPENDIX B**  
**TABULATED SURVEY RESULTS**

Table B1

## Response to Effectiveness

Question	Rating				
	Very Effective	Neutral			No Effect
	5	4	3	2	1
#1. Effectiveness of decentralization and empowerment on day-to-day operations?	1 (3.8%)	1 (3.8%)	2 (7.7%)	12 (46.2%)	10 (38.5%)
#2. Effectiveness of empowerment on responsiveness to needs of individual commands?	0	2 (7.7%)	5 (19.2%)	10 (38.5%)	9 (34.6%)
#3. Effectiveness of empowerment on the responsiveness to needs of communities served by stations?	0	8 (30.8%)	5 (19.2%)	7 (26.9%)	6 (23.1%)

Table B2

## Response to Understanding and Extent

Question	Response	
	Yes	No
#4. Is there a clear understanding by the officers at what level they can make decisions?	3 (11.5%)	23 (88.5%)
#5. Have officers taken decentralization and empowerment beyond what was originally expected?	5 (19.2%)	21 (80.8)

Table B3

Impact on Command Awareness

Question	Response		
	More Informed	No Change	Less Informed
#6. How has decentralization and empowerment effected how well informed you are on activities within your command?	4 (15.4%)	12 (46.2%)	10 (38.5%)

Table B4

Various Organizational Impacts of Decentralization and Empowerment

Question on Impact of Decentralization and Empowerment on:	Rating				
	Improved	No Change			Declined
	5	4	3	2	1
#7. Chain-of- command? (one non response)	2 (7.7%)	2 (7.7%)	6 (23.1%)	4 (15.4%)	11 (42.3%)
#8. Accountability? (one non response)	0	3 (11.5%)	12 (46.2%)	5 (19.2%)	5 (19.2%)
#9. Ability to initiate discipline?	0	0	18 (69.2%)	1 (3.8%)	7 (26.9%)
#10. Consistency in the Battalion?	0	0	11 (42.3%)	9 (34.6%)	6 (23.1%)

Table B5

Additional Positive Effects of Decentralization and Empowerment

<b>Areas where a positive effect has been seen</b>
Community/Public Relations. <i>[4 responses]</i>
Less Paperwork. <i>[2 responses]</i>
Some Minor areas have been streamlined (i.e. vacation deferment). <i>[2 responses]</i>
Officers are taking more initiative.
In limited cases, officers have taken the concept to heart and are actively managing their commands.
Better time management - no through channel delays.
Captains are making more decisions.
Lessening of a few mundane tasks.
Some everyday hiring and staffing issues are being handled.

Table B6

Additional Negative Effects of Decentralization and Empowerment

<b>Areas where a negative effect has been seen</b>
Breakdown or lack of information through channels. <i>[2 responses]</i>
Very little has changed. Decentralization is a concept not reality. <i>[2 responses]</i>
Workload at the battalion level has increased. Less approval of documents has generated more projects pushed down to the BC level. <i>[2 responses]</i>
Lack of good communication and basic information re. What is going on (direction) with the department. Nothing has happened since the original letter from the chief. Little or no information from the administration on which to base decisions. <i>[2 responses]</i>
More time is now being devoted to redoing or correcting. We need to go through channels. Circumventing going through channels. <i>[2 responses]</i>
Decentralization and empowerment are in name only (really don't have it). <i>[2 responses]</i>
There has been minimal decentralization and less empowerment.
Department has not embraced the concept to its full intent; reluctant to lose span of control.
We really don't have much power.
Some bad decisions being made.
Confusion by officers on which decisions can or cannot be made.
Many of the standard polices are being ignored.
The chain-of-command not being used.
Adherence to staffing and hiring issues
Time keeping problems are not being identified.
Inability to control members off on VC impacts staffing at end of year.