Executive Analysis of Fire Service Operations in Emergency Management

Establishing a Draft of a Mentoring Program for the Cotuit (MA) Fire-Rescue Department

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Certification Statement

I hereby certify that this paper constitutes my own product, that where the language of others is set forth, quotation marks so indicate, and that appropriate credit is given where I have used the language, ideas, expressions, or writings of another.

Signed: _________________________________
Abstract

The problem is that the Cotuit Fire Rescue and Emergency Services Department did not have a Mentoring program in place for recently appointed Company Officers to effectively make a successful transition to their new leadership roles. The purpose of this research was to prepare a draft of a mentoring program for new Company Officers. An action research method was used to answer the following research questions:

1. What are the aspects needed for an effective mentoring program within the Cotuit Fire-Rescue & Emergency Services Department?
2. How can a mentoring program benefit the organization?
3. What are the organizational barriers to the implementation of a mentoring program?
4. Are there any recognized standards for mentoring programs in the fire service?

Literature review and survey results found information helpful in understanding mentoring and its use in the fire service. Recommendations were made on how a mentoring or officer development program could be used in the Cotuit (MA) Fire-Rescue & Emergency Services Department.
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Introduction

Over the past decade there have been many changes in the fire and EMS service throughout our country. The service has become very complex for today’s first responders. Many departments started as simple volunteer fire departments and rescue squads with citizens volunteering to help their community. Over the years the make-up and scope of the department has changed dramatically. Those rescue squads have now become emergency medical services staffed by paramedics offering advanced life support. The fire service has taken on the problems of technical rescue, hazardous materials incidents, and now even has a concern with weapons of mass destruction.

In different parts of the country many volunteer departments have become combination or career departments because call volume or the inability to get volunteers has demanded it. In Cotuit, like other local departments on Cape Cod, Fire Chiefs are appointed and no longer elected. Long ago, volunteers were nominated to a fire department or rescue squad based upon popularity, and other members could actually blackball a person from joining. There were no tests for promotion and often officers were elected, again by popularity, to a position or were appointed at the whim of the Fire Chief and/or a Board of Fire Commissioners.

As departments grew, many of the older, experienced volunteers did not make the transition to become career personnel. Those that did make the transition or were hired early in the department’s growth, were most often the ones first promoted in the department’s evolution from call to career. However, like any profession, age catches up and retirement becomes mandatory. The fire service, by virtue of the nature of the job and the risks associated with it, is different in that, at any time, an injury or death may result in a sudden, unanticipated promotion.
As seasoned veterans leave the job, new personnel are being promoted to fill those vacant positions. The question is that are these people prepared?

The Cotuit Fire-Rescue and Emergency Services Department (Cotuit Fire) is currently reviewing a change in its rank structure. This comes at a time when the Fire Chief has also announced his intentions of retiring in July of 2008. As the department prepares for a new Chief, and a new chain-of-command, this researcher, as both an officer and second in command of the department, is asking the same question; are these people prepared? With no current formal or informal mentoring in place are our future leaders prepared for the responsibility? Some departments like Cotuit Fire share in this concern, while others like private industry have developed successful mentoring programs that have helped to give future leaders the tools needed to help them prepare for new challenges and new responsibilities.

The problem is that the Cotuit Fire-Rescue and Emergency Services Department does not have a mentoring program in place for newly appointed company officers to successfully make the transition to their new leadership roles. The purpose of this research is to prepare a draft for a mentoring program for new company officers. An action research method was used to answer the following research questions.

1. What aspect of an effective mentoring program is needed within the Cotuit Fire-Rescue & Emergency Services Department?
2. How can a mentoring program benefit the organization?
3. What are the organizational barriers to implementing aspects of a mentoring program?
4. Are there any recognized standards for mentoring programs in the fire service?
Background and Significance

The Cotuit Fire District is one of five fire districts located within the Town of Barnstable, Massachusetts. Located on Cape Cod, approximately 70 miles south of Boston, this peninsula, surrounded to the north by Cape Cod Bay, and to the south by Nantucket Sound, is a popular tourist destination. (APPENDIX A).

Cotuit, six square miles, like many Cape Cod towns, is seeing once former small summer cottages being torn down and replaced with larger, known locally as, trophy style homes. Many of these multi-million dollar homes are second homes and are only occupied during the summer months. The type and size of these homes also means a variety of floor designs and construction materials. A residential community, Cotuit has very little commercial and no industrial properties. (APPENDIX B)

The Cotuit Fire-Rescue and Emergency Services Department was first formed in 1912 as Cotuit Chemical Company No. 1. In 1916, with the purchase of a Ford Model T fire engine, Cotuit had the first motorized piece of fire apparatus on Cape Cod. In addition to the fire department, the Cotuit Fire District operates its own water department, a meeting hall and is responsible for the lighting and maintenance of the street lights within its jurisdiction.

As a full service department, Cotuit Fire is responsible for all fire, emergency medical and technical rescue (including water rescue and recovery), and is the primary first responder to all emergencies in its jurisdiction. The department did 756 calls in 2007. To answer this need Cotuit Fire currently has a Fire Chief and a career staff of 10 on rotating shifts. One shift has a Captain, also the fire inspector, and each shift has a senior private or also known as a shift supervisor. There are two career firefighters, all EMTs and Paramedics, on 24 hour shifts. In addition the department has two firefighters assigned to rotating ten hour day shifts. Days have
historically been the department’s busiest time and the time most often difficult to get recall of call or career personnel. The career staff is supplemented by a call staff of six firefighters, EMTs, and Paramedics.

Enacted by special legislation in 1926, the department remained a volunteer department until 1982 and then hired our first career Firefighter/Paramedic. This career Firefighter/Paramedic worked Monday through Friday and performed duties such as conducting fire inspections and responding to all EMS and fire calls. The Fire Chief’s position remained part-time at this point. With an increase in call volume and continued difficulty in retaining call firefighters, the district realized the need to hire career personnel and employed two firefighters 24 hours a day in 1994.

The present Fire Chief, Paul Frazier, announced, his intention (after 22 years as Chief), to retire in July of 2008. As the Board of Fire Commissioners start the process of searching for a new Chief, they are simultaneously negotiating with the Firefighter’s union to change to a more formal command structure. This command structure would create the position of Lieutenant to either replace the Senior Privates or promote them if both parties agree on the process.

Presently Cotuit Fire will not cover the costs, or approve time off, for any firefighter attending the National Fire Academy, professional development seminars, or the Massachusetts Chief Fire Officer program. The department offers no company officer training. It does, by Union contract, cover college level fire science courses. The evolution and size of the department has resulted in a lack of preparation for firefighters to transition to leadership roles at the company or chief officer level. This became very apparent when the Fire Chief and the Captain were both out injured at the same time. A conflict ensued while determining who was next in the chain of command.
This research directly relates to the Executive Analysis of Fire Service Operations in the Emergency Management course of the National Fire Academy’s Executive Fire Officers Program through problem solving, team building and teamwork. This project shall help the Cotuit Fire Rescue and Emergency Services Department with mentoring its personnel and preparing them for future leadership roles.

Literature Review

The research for this project started in September of 2007 with the Learning Resource Center (LRC) of the National Fire Academy in Emmitsburg, Maryland. A review was initiated by first searching through numerous fire related technical journals, magazines, and periodicals. Included in this review was a search of Applied Research Projects of similar content of Executive Fire Officer Students. An extensive internet search was conducted on both public and private mentoring programs using the internet. A review of the National Fire Protection Association Standard 1021 and the International Association of Fire Chief’s hand book.

There are many perspectives of mentoring. Traditionally, mentoring is described as activities conducted by a person (the mentor) for another person (the mentee) in order to help that other person do a job more effectively and/or progress in their career. (Mentoring, n. d.) The simpler definition given is that a mentor is probably someone who has “been there, done that” before. (2008) Following a promotion many firefighters feel that they are unprepared or have been “thrown into the fire.” While they feel trained to fight a fire, with only 1% of a firefighter’s time is spent fighting a fire, they often feel as if they lack the experience to function on a daily basis. (Alyn, n. d.)
Establishing a Mentoring Program

Mentoring has been going on in the fire service for hundreds of years. The transfer of knowledge can be transferred formally or informally. Most of us were mentored by veteran firefighters who were willing to share their knowledge or experience often around a kitchen table over a cup of coffee in the firehouse. (Gates, 2003, 104) With the lowering of the retirement age and the concurrent increase in retirement allowances, institutional knowledge is exiting the fire service at a rate unheard of even a few years ago. The critical loss is in emergency operations. (Sager, 2005) A mentor may have many roles. They may be a friend, listener, coach, resource or a combination of all these things. The mentor’s role is to listen, try to determine the source of a particular problem, and see if there is some guidance they can provide. (Baylis, 2003, 68)

Mentoring facilitates relationships between people. These relationships often involve learning, sharing information and ideas, and networking. They can be essential relationships to success both for the department and the individual. (Alexander, n. d.) Mentors must have an idea where the department is going, what is going to happen next. This vision doesn’t mean mentors have to see far into the department’s future, they simply must have enough insight to see the end of a recruit’s training period. (Landerville, 2003, 96) What makes a good mentor? Mentors listen and provide honest feedback. They can also help someone advance their career by talking to the higher-ups about what an individual can contribute. (Harris, n. d.)

The Ford Motor Company incorporates mentoring as part of its entry level, leadership potential program. At Ford leadership students will work with a mentor to plan out a personal program of development assignments that reflect your interests and the company’s needs. Students will receive support, coaching and mentoring from a program mentor as well as immediate supervisors. (Career Programs, 2003) Lee Iacocca, a former President of the Ford Motor Company, and later President at Chrysler, said that his first mentor at Ford was a guy
named Charlie Beacham. Iaccoca said that Beacham rubbed his nose in the retail business
teaching him about leasing, finance, and that monthly payments are the cornerstone of
everything in the automobile business. It was Beacham who made Iaccoca go to Dale Carnegie
to learn how to communicate. (Davis, n. d.)

Major League Baseball’s 2007 World Series Champions, the Boston Red Sox have joined
with the Mass Mentoring Program and have developed a Red Sox Mentoring Challenge
Program. This program encourages both individual and companies across Massachusetts to
experience the power of youth mentoring. (The Red Sox, 2008) The Mass Mentoring Partnership
(MMP) is the only statewide organization solely dedicated to bringing mentoring to scale in
Massachusetts. Mass Mentoring Partnerships offers training and technical assistance to help
organize and sustain high quality mentoring programs.

Wal-Mart, the world’s number one retailer with 6400 stores, has a strong mentoring
program, with 76% of managers participating compared to a Top 50 company average of 32
percent. With annual revenues of $345 billion dollars a year, mentoring is part of its diversity
commitment and a natural extension of Wal-Mart’s core beliefs: ‘Respect for the Individual’,
‘Service to the Customer.’, and ‘Strive for Excellence.’ (No. 41: Wal-Mart, 2007)

In the job description for a supervisor in the Financial Lease Administration for Seattle,
Washington’s Starbucks Coffee, the ad states that this job contributes to Starbucks success by
hiring, training, coaching and mentoring, and on-going development of department partners.
(Supervisor, 2008)

The Boeing Company, famous for building airplanes carrying the Boeing name,
mentoring is a part of the culture, a responsibility for both the mentors and the people they
mentor. According to Hank Queen, vice president of Engineering and Manufacturing at Boeing
Commercial Airplanes, “The quality of leadership in a company can either limit or leverage a team’s performance, so mentoring and coaching are terrific ways to improve both the quality of the team and the company leadership.” (Sanders, 2004)

Technology is also being used to help supplement mentoring. Apple Computers, using iChat AV and iSight cameras are being used in school to allow students to easily communicate with a mentor. Having a professional mentor for high school students is an effective way to enrich the learning experience while at the same time prepares students for future careers. (Mino, 2004)

While mentoring, the process by which organizational knowledge and experience of senior executives are transferred to others in the organization is a valuable learning mechanism widely employed in the private sector but almost non-existent in the fire service, (Gates, 2003 104) there are exceptions.

Members of the Women Chief Fire Officers Mentoring Program have served as Chief Officers and have faced the challenges and concern other women firefighters may have. Mentoring is a successful way to tap into this talent, explore new ways of doing things, network, exchange ideas, develop their career, solve problems and get desired results. A mentor is an experienced person that provides guidance and support by acting as a role model, guide tutor, coach, or confidante. (Women Chief Fire, n. d.)

And while women fire officers have developed a mentoring program to meet their needs, younger people create other challenges. The new generation of officers is different than those of the past. Sometimes referred to as Millennium Babies they tend to like change; understand technology; they are independent, loyal to their team; and want to work in an atmosphere where there is opportunity and growth. They need constant feedback, are financially savvy, and are
good at balancing work and personal time. Mentoring will help this generation of new recruits learn the positive ethics and culture of their agency. (Rossow, n. d.)

In the Fire Department of New York, Battalion Chief Gerald Tracy appealed to the firefighters of Battalion 49 to join together in a partnership of training that will raise the bar of excellence, develop character, and promote future leaders within the department. In the Firefighter Mentorship program working firefighters on each tour of duty are considered a “Mentorship Team.” This endeavor involves firefighters mentoring firefighters. It solicits the diverse talents, experience, knowledge and skills of every firefighter to join a mentorship program designed to get everyone involved in the quest for excellence. (Tracy, 2004, 121) Many trades and professions, including health care providers, require many hours of mentoring or apprenticeship prior to working in an unsupervised environment. Mentoring is a common practice in pre-hospital emergency care where many jurisdictions require a new paramedic to partner with another paramedic for a specified time prior to practicing in a one-paramedic/one-EMT or a two-paramedic configuration. (Pointer, 2001, 379) In Memphis, Tennessee, a mentoring program was established within the fire department’s EMS division with the goal of retaining quality paramedics through a program that teaches new employees how to operate independently with the MFD EMS system. To do so, the recruit must be mentored by an active crew who’s qualified and trained to serve as a field training officer. (Logan, 2007)

At the February 6, 2008 Fire Chief’s Conference in Tuscaloosa, Alabama, Captain Ray Gayk of Ontario, California addressed the lack of training of company officers in his California department. Captain Gayk, with the support of his deputy chief, initiated a mentoring program. Staff interested in being promoted to company officer may participate in the voluntary, no-cost program that teaches them to be competent counselors, managers, and leaders as well as prepares
them for promotional testing. (Gayk, 2008) Mentoring takes place within the agency whenever experienced members help those less experienced, but the mentoring of new recruits is most critical. (Rossow, n.d.) The Virginia Beach (VA) Fire Department recognized this and looked to establish a formal mentorship program that would allow the experience and knowledge acquired by its long-term employees to be passed on before they are lost to retirement, thus reducing the initial risks for the newly promoted officer, their firefighters, and the community at large. (Halstead, 2003, 9) Mentoring proves to be a powerful way to imprint values, change behaviors, transfer skills and improve performance and communications as well as retain high performers. (Organizational, 2007)

Mentoring at the Executive Fire Officer level is different from that used to teach tactical decision-making or technical skills. What we are talking about here is mentorship provided by an organizational leader with the specific intent of creating a future leader. (Gates, 2003) The Colorado State Fire Chiefs’ Association recognized the need at the executive level and scheduled a conference on mentoring and established a Fire Chief’s mentoring program. By implementing a new chiefs mentoring process, leaders will ensure a successful transition and develop skills and adaptive cultures necessary for long term effectiveness. Mentor chiefs can assist new chiefs in their transition by sharing their skills and experience. (Mentoring: Leaders, 2008) Trust plays a large role in any leadership team and mentoring could increase the trust intertwined throughout the officers. This trust, and the ability of a smooth transition, could be significant as the department could possibly never have to look outside the department for its top leadership. (Myers, 2004, 8)

The mentoring program starts at the administrative level. All administrative officers must make mentoring an organizational priority within a busy and growing fire department.
Mentoring takes place within the agency whenever experienced members help those less experienced, but the mentoring of new recruits is most critical. (Rossow, n.d., 2) Obviously new employees benefit from mentoring, but mentoring also benefits the mentor and the department. The mentor not only has the satisfaction of playing an important part in the professional development of their protégé, but they also have the opportunity to enhance their own skills and knowledge. The mentor/protégé relationship does not develop overnight. It helps to have clear guidelines so both parties know how to proceed. (Baylis, 2003, 69) The formal aspects of mentoring can be implemented through education by giving mentoring training to all officers. The department’s mentors should be senior officers who volunteer and are selected as mentors outside the protégé’s chain of command. (Inzer, 2007) Mentoring is a life-long process. When done correctly it never ends. (Benjamin, n. d.)

The problem with beginning a successful mentoring program is how new recruits are seen by the organization. To some firefighters, adding new recruits means more hands to help wash trucks, repack hose, and clean station bathrooms. To others, it’s another opportunity to take willing men and women and transform them into firefighters. (Landreville, 2003, 95) The fire service has been slow in recognizing the benefits of mentoring and often lacks the understanding of the goals and methods of this type of knowledge transfer. (Gates, 2003, 104) Formal programs are common in practice in the private sector and almost non-existent in the fire service mainly because of the need for program management and financial resource allocation. Informal mentoring is the most common format; the mentor and mentee chose each other outside the boundaries of a structured program. Much informal mentoring goes on without conscious awareness that a mentoring relationship is present. (Gates, 2003, 105) Though informal mentoring most often takes place at some level a criticism of informal mentoring is that it
provides no formal goals, objectives, evaluations, or permanent and official documentation. What this informal mentoring does is give the new recruits a false sense of learning when they’re actually observing, and, in most cases, doing only the dirty work. (Landreville, 2003, 95) If properly implemented and used, it may help your department retain the valuable team members you’ve worked so hard to hire and train. (Baylis, 2003, 69)

Formal mentoring programs can be a scary concept for both the new and seasoned managers and fire officers, because of the fear of failure. New managers may be afraid of being viewed as knuckleheads by their mentors, while seasoned managers acting as mentors may fear being viewed as unhelpful or uncaring. Programs that force mentoring relationships onto people are probably not going to succeed. (Watson, 2003) Forced mentoring also doesn’t always take into account that the fact that a person who is technically qualified to be a mentor may lack the desire or inclination. And mentees may need more then one mentor. (Van Collie, 1999, 256) If you fail to encourage a mentoring process, that knowledge base can be wasted. (Daniels, 2005, 146)

A successful mentoring partnership provides positive outcomes for both the protégé and mentor through the expansion of knowledge, skill, energy, and creativity. The Santa Clara County Fire Department’s mentoring program was first discussed in 1997. It is not a training program; is outside the parameters of the recruit academy, and should not be viewed as a means for promotional testing assistance. Voluntary, it has as its core the purpose of professional development of the protégé through the counsel and guidance of the mentor. (Training: Mentor, n. d.) Mentors are always on the job, and their rookies will scrutinize them all the time. It may be at a fire or false alarm, but the rookies will observe how their mentors act, what they did, and why. Did the mentors follow the department’s standard operating guidelines? Why or why not?
The depth of the mentor’s training, their explanation, attitude, work ethic, and professionalism will all be seen through the eyes of the probationary firefighter and contribute to the success of a mentoring program. (Landreville, 2003, 97) To aspire to and be influenced by these attributes lays the foundation for and shapes character. Developing character guides us in our performance, determines proper behavior, and it connects knowledge and understanding to action. (Tracy, 2004, 121)

Mentoring programs used to be between an older executive, or for the purpose of this research, fire officers or seasoned firefighters, who are the mentors, and a younger person looking to move up in their career. Today, the relationships take many forms. Small businesses can learn from larger businesses. People at the same level can mentor each other by sharing ideas and different experiences. Women can learn from female executives and minorities can learn from minorities who have broken through the barriers success. (Alexander, n.d.) The benefits to ensure consistent operations in the station and on the fireground. (Halstead, 2003, 23)

In developing a mentoring process the program must include, but not be limited to, goals, objectives, guidelines, evaluation timelines, forms, mentor selection, scope of the mentor’s role and troubleshooting any potential conflicts The program should have a final evaluation of the mentors and the effectiveness of the mentoring program, (Landreville, 2003) The United States Coast Guard has a web-based mentoring process that helps employees to determine if a mentoring relationship is best for them. It guides the mentee through assessing his/her development needs, finding a suitable mentor from a dynamic database, and creates a mentoring agreement. It also supports the participants by providing just-in-time instructions and automated notifications for key activities. (How Mentoring Works, 2008)
Mentoring is no longer seen as “nice to have” as organizations scramble to find ways to develop their workforce. Such programs needn’t be complex to bring real value to the new hire, the mentor, and the organization as a whole. (Miller, 2006) Mentoring shouldn’t be a buzzword, and it shouldn’t be something that is hurriedly put together so that you can say you have a mentor program. At the same time, it shouldn’t take years to develop – or to get through. (Lasky, 2002)

In summary, the literature review finds that mentoring is a common personal development tool utilized by some of the most recognized corporations in the world. The Ford Motor Company, Wal-Mart, and Starbucks Coffee all have some degree of mentoring in the workplace. The success of these programs is finding its way into the fire service. Mentoring helps the mentor, the organization or department, and the mentee by sharing knowledge that may be potentially be lost as the older workforce retires. Though there are both formal and informal forms of mentoring, the literature review finds recommendations and procedures to develop a formal mentoring program. Mentoring does not have to be the seasoned firefighter to the rookie. Though this type of relationship is the most common type of mentoring, the literature review found other examples. Women are sharing thoughts, ideas, and knowledge with other women, and chiefs with other chiefs. Proven to be successful in the business world the trend is finding fire and EMS agencies are adopting some form of mentoring to bring that same success into their departments

Procedures

This research project started with a review of trade journals and periodicals from the National Fire Academy’s Learning Resource Center in Emmitsburg, Maryland in September of 2007. Further research was done using the library resources of the Centerville-Osterville-
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Marstons Mills (MA) Department of Fire-Rescue & Emergency Services, and the Cotuit (MA) Fire Department. An extensive internet search using Google and Yahoo search engines resulted in supplemental research material. The research topic was selected because the Cotuit Fire Department is presently undergoing a restructuring process. A change in the chain of command is occurring so the topic was pertinent to an ongoing concern within the department. Additional information was provided by the retiring Cotuit Fire Chief, Paul Frazier.

The literature review found an extensive amount of information relative to the topic of mentoring in both the private sector and municipalities. Though there was an abundant amount of information relating to the mentoring of new hires or recruits, or those at the executive level, it was more difficult to find information relative to the middle manager or company officer.

On February 4, 2008 this researcher sent out 150 surveys (APPENDIX C) to Fire Departments and Fire Chiefs throughout the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. Research was limited by a return of just 34 completed surveys, a 22% return rate. This researcher only sent surveys to departments within Massachusetts because the demographics and operating procedures can easily be compared to those of the Cotuit Fire Department. The answers to these surveys and related comments were used to determine the results. The questions asked were:

1. Do you have a Mentoring Program for Company Officers?
2. Do you have a Mentoring Program for Chief Officers?
3. If you don’t have a program in place do you plan on creating one in the near future?
4. Do you feel that your organization is offering enough training both in-house and outside to prepare firefighters for future advancement?
5. Do you offer to send your personnel to the National Fire Academy and do you cover their time?

6. If you have a program could you please send any information that you might have?

Please provide any additional comments or information that you feel would be helpful with my project.

The assumptions were that all returned surveys were answered honestly. It was also assumed that those being sent surveys were familiar with the concept of mentoring. Attempting to limit information relating directly to the fire service was not practical because of so much related information in the private sector.

A second internal survey (APPENDIX D) was sent to 18 firefighters and the Fire Chief of the Cotuit (MA) Fire-Rescue Department. It was assumed that with current changes within the organization there would be much interest in the topic and the researcher expected a good return. Unfortunately, 6 out of the 18, or 33% were returned creating an unanticipated limitation. Those questions asked internally were:

1) Do you feel that the Cotuit Fire-Rescue Department should implement a formal mentoring program for new recruits both fulltime and call?

2) Do you feel that the Cotuit Fire-Rescue Department should implement a formal mentoring program for future and newly appointed officers?

3) Would you participate in a formal mentoring program if offered?

4) Would you like to mentor new employees?

5) Would you like to be mentored to help you prepare for future advancement?

6) Do you have any questions about mentoring?
Again the assumption was that questions would be answered honestly and that there would be an interest in the topic due to the current changes in structure within the department.

Follow-up personal communication was done with a number of those returning surveys, as well as other fire officers known to have mentoring or a professional development program currently in place.

A list of terms is supplied to assist the reader in understanding the applied research project. They are:

A. Mentoring: The pairing of a more experienced and knowledgeable worker (the mentor) with a less experienced worker (the mentee or protégé) to assist in developing the less experienced member of the relationship.

B. Senior Private: A supervisor within the Cotuit Fire-Rescue Department. A position that applicants had to test for, it is a rank above Firefighter but below that of Lieutenant.

C. Lieutenant: A line (company) officer in the Fire and EMS service. Within the Cotuit Fire-Rescue Department Lieutenant falls in the command structure above a Senior Private but below the rank of Captain.

D. Captain: Above the rank of Lieutenant and second-in-command of the Cotuit Fire-Rescue Department.

E. Fire District: A special district enabled by legislation and given the ability to tax residents within its borders. The Cotuit Fire-Rescue Department is an entity of the Cotuit Fire District and is separate from the Town of Barnstable in which Cotuit is located.

F. Protégé: A person who receives support and protection from an influential patron who furthers the protégé’s career.
Establishing a Mentoring Program

Results

To help answer the research questions 34 or 22% of 150 surveys sent throughout Massachusetts were returned. Only 3 or 2% of the returned surveys to these departments were found to have a variation of a mentoring program in place. Six of the 18 (33%) internal department surveys were returned.

Results for the first research question: What are the aspects needed for an effective mentoring program within the Cotuit Fire-Rescue & Emergency Services Department?

The literature review found an abundant amount of information about mentoring. The mentoring program must first start at the administrative level and become an organizational priority. (Landreville, 2003) Five of the internal surveys returned found that Cotuit firefighters were interested in some aspect of a mentoring program, only one returned answered a definitive no to any type of mentoring program. Given the size of the Cotuit Fire-Rescue Department one aspect of mentoring is that mentoring does not have to necessarily be done by or with department personnel. Following the example cited by Linda Alexander; small businesses can learn from larger businesses (Alexander, n.d.). There was a potential found in this research for Cotuit Fire Department to learn and mentor with larger departments. There are formal and informal types of mentoring that are on-going. (Gates, 2003) Whether formal or informal there are aspects of mentoring already occurring within Cotuit Fire. New hires or recruits observe the actions of older or seasoned veterans. (Tracy, 2004)

Research question #2: How can a mentoring program benefit the organization?

Potential benefits to the department include increased retention, better assimilation of the new employee, increased job satisfaction and loyalty. The sooner the employee connects with others in the organization, the more apt they are to feel like family. (Baylis, 2003) Mentoring
will help the next generation of new recruits learn the positive ethics and culture of the agency. Mentors obtain varying perspectives form their protégés, which generate creativity. (Rossow, n.d.) This may help Cotuit Fire solve problems in ways never before considered. Mentoring helps to determine competence and ensure that policies and procedures of the Cotuit Fire-Rescue Department are understood and followed. It also ensures that the experiences of senior personnel are transferred to others in the organization. This is also a valuable learning mechanism. (Gates, 2003) No matter the size of the department, Cotuit would share some of the same benefits as other agencies including the City of Virginia Beach (VA). The department’s image would be enhanced and participants would be motivated. This also ensures consistent operations in the station and on the fireground, and helps to identify future leaders of the department.

Research question #3: What are the organizational barriers to the implementation of a mentoring program?

One barrier is the actual size of the department and the number of personnel. It’s difficult to develop a program with a limited pool to draw from and no organizational interest or support. Like the fire service itself, Cotuit Fire may lack the awareness of the benefits and have a poor understanding of the goals and methods of this type of knowledge transfer. In the past Cotuit Fire has not encouraged its personnel to attend officer training either locally or at the National Fire Academy. A mentoring program may be perceived as a project that requires significant management and financial resources. (Gates, 2003) An organizational barrier may be the department’s own Firefighter’s Union. The Union may feel that a mentoring program, even voluntarily done, is a change of working conditions. Implementing the program may be seen as similar to the need to have had to bargain for personnel evaluations. Many may not understand the difference.
Research question #4: Are there any recognized standards for mentoring programs in the fire service? This researcher was unable to locate any standards for mentoring in the fire service. There were several Career Development Programs located as a result of the survey and internet search. The Mashpee Massachusetts Fire Rescue Department has a Professional Development & Education Program that pertains to the entry level firefighter position right though to Chief Officers within the department. The same was found for the College Station Texas Fire Department and the Martinsville Fire and EMS Department in Virginia. There was a review of the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA, 2003) standard 1021 (Standard for Fire Officer Professional Qualifications) and a review of the International Association of Fire Chief’s handbook 20003 edition.

This researcher had communications with Deputy Sheldon Hamblin of the Mashpee Massachusetts, Fire Rescue Department (S. Hamblin, personnel communications, March 2008) with regards to their professional development program. There were additional communications with Captain Greg Rodgers of the College Station Texas Fire Rescue Department (G. Rodgers, personnel communications, March 2008)

This researcher has concluded, after reviewing the background and significance and the literature review, which presenting a draft for a mentoring program within the Cotuit Fire and Rescue Department is not the best course of action. There is presently a greater need for a Professional Development Program. Based on the size of the organization and the present rank structure this researcher has prepared a draft of a Professional Development Program. (Appendix E)
Discussion

Today’s new officers will face danger and ethical dilemmas throughout their careers but we can help prepare them for those challenges by mentoring them about the topics that are important to their physical, legal, and emotional survival. Mentoring is not something we should do; it is something we must do to improve our profession. The responsibility to properly prepare our new warriors lies with the old warriors. (Rossow, n.d. 10)

Taking on the job of a mentor and committing yourself to constant scrutiny and questioning isn’t for everyone. But those individuals who dedicate themselves to teaching others are sure to leave their mark on the fire service, one good firefighter at a time. (Landerville, 2003)

Our greatest legacy is how well we have trained and prepared our firefighters, our future leaders. (Tracy, 2004)

I mentor, train my officers, and lead them with tact, enthusiasm, firmness, and justice. I command their confidence and loyalty. They know I would not assign them to any duty or task that I would not perform myself. (Landerville, 2003)

Fireground command is a crucial skill set of the fire service, but the members who possess the institutional knowledge have either left already or are about to depart. The formation of fire ground commanders is a long term task. Making certain that there are officers in the future who can perform these tasks in a credible fashion requires planning, commitment and cooperation. Fire chiefs can’t afford to ignore this important obligation. (Sager, 2005)

Having been promoted to Lieutenant, then Captain of a small department this author often felt, like many newly appointed fire officers, that he was unprepared for the task. The need and consideration of mentoring, or preparing our personnel for the future, became evident in the
summer of 2007. Both the Fire Chief and the Captain (this author and also second-in-command of the department) were both out of work due to injuries. The first concern was that Cotuit Fire did not even have a formal, recognized, chain-of-command. In other words, with both the Chief and the Captain not available, who was third in command? At the time there was a question as to how long the Fire Chief would be out of work and what tasks, even at the light duty level, would he be able to do? This created problems because the Fire Chief was the only individual who worked on the budget and performed other administrative tasks. The problem was compounded with the individual who was second-in-command of the department out injured as well. In the past few years only the Chief and the Captain had been conducting fire inspections and their absence required the department to ask a neighboring department to cover fire inspections during this time.

During the summer of 2007, the Fire Chief (Chief for the past 22 years), announced his retirement for the summer of 2008. This brought about some questions regarding the transition of duties from the old Chief to the new. Although the department has hired an outside consulting agency to interview and recommend applicants, the final decision is to be made by the Board of Fire Commissioners. The Board hopes to hire a new Fire Chief and have a transition period before the current Chief retires but this may depend on who the final applicant is and his prior responsibilities. Should the current Chief leave before a new Chief begins, the second-in-command of this department is not prepared to take over some of the administrative duties needed to keep the department operating smoothly.
As of this writing, the Cotuit Fire Rescue Department has decided not to give a final interview to any in-house applicants but has chosen to hire a new Chief from outside the organization.

Recommendations

The problem addressed by this research project is that the Cotuit Fire Rescue and Emergency Services Department does not have a Mentoring program in place for newly Appointed Company Officers to effectively make a successful transition to their new leadership roles. The purpose of this research was to prepare a draft of a mentoring program for new Company Officers.

The Cotuit Fire Rescue and Emergency Services Department must, through the Board of Fire Commissioners and the New Fire Chief make training and education a top priority. The department must establish a Professional Development Policy that will effectively prepare its firefighters for the future.

The organization must have minimum standards for company officers and make funding available to all personnel. The organization must take advantage of state and federal funding to assist firefighters. Department personnel must be encouraged to attend the National Fire Academy and the State Fire Academy for additional training.

The department should work with neighboring departments to assist with officer development. Because the department is so small, other departments may be able to assist by offering ride along time with more experienced officers and additional classroom training.

The Firefighters Union (local 3642) must be involved from the start of this process to help with the “buy in” of the Professional Development Program. Once this program is
underway and progress is being made, hopefully the department will do the same for a Chief Officer Program and/or develop some type of succession planning program to prepare present officers for the move to gold.

As the department progresses and personnel gain experience in the new role of a supervisor, it is the hope of this researcher that some type of a mentoring program can be established within.
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Appendix A

Map of Cape Cod Massachusetts
Appendix B

Map of Town of Barnstable Massachusetts
Appendix C

Mentoring Survey One

Dear Chief,

I am presently enrolled in the Executive Fire Officer Program at the National Fire Academy. One of the requirements is an applied research project on a previously selected topic. Would you please take a few minutes to complete this questionnaire? It would help immensely. The topic of my project is **Establishing a Mentoring Program for Company Officers**. Please answer the following questions.

1. Do you have a Mentoring program for Company Officers?  
   - Yes______  No_____

2. Do you have a Mentoring Program for Chief Officers?  
   - Yes______  No_____

3. If you don’t have a program in place do you plan on creating one in the near future.  
   - Yes______  No_____

4. Do you feel that your organization is offering enough training both in house and outside to prepare your Firefighters for future advancement?  
   - Yes______  No_____

5. Do you feel that your organization is offering enough training both in house and outside to prepare your Company Officer’s for future advancement?  
   - Yes______  No_____

6. Do you offer to send your personnel to the National Fire Academy and do you cover there time.  
   - Yes______  No_____

7. If you have a program in place, could you please send any information that you might have.

Please provide any additional information that you feel would be helpful with my project.
Appendix D
Mentoring Survey Two

(1) Do you feel that the Cotuit Fire/Rescue Department should implement a formal mentoring program for new recruits both fulltime and call.

Yes.    No.

(2) Do you feel that the Cotuit Fire/Rescue Department should implement a formal mentoring program for future and newly appointed officers?

Yes.    No.

(3) Would you participate in a formal mentoring program if offered?

Yes.    No.

(4) Would you like to mentor new employees?

Yes.    No.

(5) Would you like to be mentored to help you prepare for future advancement?

Yes.    No.

(6) Do you have any questions or comments about mentoring

This survey is being used to complete my project this year in the Executive Fire Officers Program at the National Fire Academy. (Your help and comments are appreciated)
Appendix E
Draft Professional Development Program

A Draft of Professional Development Training and Education Program:

Intent:

The intent of this guideline is to create a Professional Development Program for all department personnel. The purpose of the Professional Development Program is to provide department personnel with a path towards career development and also, for the department to have a pool of qualified applicants to promote from. The Professional Development Program is linked to the department’s promotional policy though the union local 3642 agreement.

Procedure:

The list of certifications and education are mandatory for the position. In a case where the employee does not have the required degree or certificate, a reasonable timeframe will be set for the employee to obtain the degree or certification if he or she is promoted to that position.

The training listed below is considered necessary occupational requirements for the given position. By possessing the listed criteria, fire officers will be more capable of possessing the required knowledge, skills and abilities for the level.

(1) **Lieutenant**

   Firefighter 1 & 2 State Certified

   Instructor 1 State Certified

   Fire Officer 1 & 2 State Certified

   Fire Inspector 1 State Certified
EMT-Basic Minimum

Hazardous Materials First Responder Operation Level

N.F.A. Basic Incident Command System for First Responders or equal

National Incident Management System (NIMS) an Introduction IS-700

National Incident Management System (NIMS) 100 & 200

Fire Officer Certificate from CCCC or equal

(2) Captain

Must be a Lieutenant for two years with the Cotuit Fire/Rescue Department

Associate Degree in related field as approved

N.F.A. Leadership 1: Strategies for Company Success

N.F.A. Leadership 2: Strategies for Personnel Success

N.F.A. Leadership 3: Strategies for Supervisory Success

National Incident Management System (NIMS) 300

National Incident Management System (NIMS) 400