Developing a Succession Plan for Indian River County Fire Rescue

Who Is Going To Lead When We Are Gone?

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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 Indian River County Fire Rescue (IRCFR) does not have a succession plan for filling its Chief Officer ranks in place for the upcoming retirements of senior staff. The purpose of this research is to develop a succession plan to prepare those junior officers wanting to fill the positions being vacated.

There were five questions asked to assist in that development: 1) What is the need for succession planning? 2) What are the advantages of having an effective succession plan, 3) how do the personnel of the IRCFR view succession planning? 4) What are other fire rescue departments in Florida doing for succession planning? 5) What are the benefits to IRCFR of developing a succession plan for replacing its senior officers?

The procedures used consisted of the use of literature review, a departmental questionnaire and phone interview to fire rescue departments in Florida. Action research was used to develop a succession plan.

The results were derived from the comments of others as well as the knowledge of others to help identify the need to develop a succession plan.

The recommendations of this research include a program in which to deliver the succession plan to the junior officers in the IRCFR Department.
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Developing a Succession

Introduction

Indian River County Fire Rescue (IRCFR) will lose many of its senior chief officers within the next five years. At the present time, Indian River County Fire Rescue does not have a succession plan in place to develop junior officers to fill the positions left vacant when those senior officers retire. The only evaluation that exists now is an outdated performance appraisal that only covers the officer’s past performance. There is no way to measure where the junior officer is strong and, more importantly, weak in their management skills or leadership skills.

The purpose of this applied research paper is to develop a process to determine what is needed to develop a junior officer and make him/her a successful chief officer. The research will look at what other departments have done to prepare their junior officers for advancement.

Action research was used to answer: 1) What is the need for succession planning? 2) What advantage is there to having an effective succession plan? 3) How do personnel of Indian River County Fire Rescue view succession planning? 4) What are other fire rescue departments in Florida doing for succession planning? 5) What are the benefits to IRCFR of developing a succession plan for replacing its senior officers?

Background and Significance

The Indian River County Fire Rescue Department provides fire rescue services to the entire county with the Town of Indian River Shores being the only exception. Located on
the central east coast of Florida in what is known as the Treasure Coast Region, IRCFRD covers an area of 543 square miles of both suburban and rural life with a population of 126,800 (2005), which increases to approximately 150,000 in the winter months. Over 90% of the citizens live within 10 miles of the Atlantic Ocean (IRCPS, 2005, p. 1).

Within our community, we have two interstate highways (I-75 & I-95), Intracoastal Waterway, Florida East Coast Railroad, two shopping malls, two general aviation airports, Piper Aircraft manufacturing plant, CVS Pharmacy distribution warehouse that covers the state of Florida, Disney’s Vero Beach Resort, Los Angeles Dodgers spring training and single-A farm team, and the citrus industry. There are five municipalities located within the county which are as follows: The City of Vero Beach, The City of Sebastian, The City of Fellsmere, The Town of Indian River Shores, and The Town of Orchid Island. Service is currently provided from 11 Fire Rescue stations with station 12 coming under construction in fiscal year 2007/2008. Indian River County Fire Rescue Department supplies the following services to the community: fire suppression, fire inspections and public education, fire investigation, training, marine firefighting (mutual aid for The United States Coast Guard), dive rescue, aircraft firefighting, special operations, hazardous materials, and Advanced Life medical treatment (ALS). There currently are 230 career and 30 volunteer personnel on the department.

Indian River County Fire Rescue (IRCFR) is in the process of losing many senior chief positions due to retirement in the next few years. IRCFR does not have any type of succession plan in place to replace them. Without a succession plan, the department is
not going to prepare those wanting to move up into a chief officer position, thus, not being prepared to care for the department or the citizens of Indian River County. There are so many areas that one needs to be educated in in the management of the fire department; however, proper mentoring and having a succession plan in place will afford those men/women the knowledge and ability to step into those chief positions. This action research project relates to the United States Fire Administration (USFA) operational objective: (e) to respond appropriately in a timely manner to emerging issues (National Fire Academy, 2003, pp. II-2).

This applied research project is related to the United States National Fire Academy’s Executive Leadership Course, Unit 7 “Succession/Replacement Planning” (National Fire Academy, 2005).

Literature Review

According to the definition found in the United States Fire Academy’s 1st Edition course “Executive Leadership”, succession planning is an organized and systematic way to ensure that employees in a particular organization are capable, competent, and willing to replace and/or succeed to strategic roles within the organization (National Fire Academy, 2005).

Many articles address the need for having a succession plan. Nicole Ross writes, “Even when critical employees give advance notice of retirement, resignation, or prolonged terminal illness, the company may not survive if it has not implemented a succession plan” (Ross, 2002).
One has only to pick up a magazine or newspaper, glance at a TV, pull up a favorite web site, or attend another in a seemingly endless series of retirement parties to realize the workforce is aging and, as a result, new challenges are upcoming (Ibarra, 2007). Like Indian River County Fire Rescue department (IRCFR), the workforce is aging. Ibarra goes on to say, “In the public sector, 30% of state government employees nationwide are eligible for retirement in 2006, and by 2008 more than 50% of federal government employees will be eligible for retirement” (Ibarra, 2007).

In their article, *Successful Succession: A Common Sense Approach to Leadership Continuity*, Victor R. Buzzotta and Robert E. Leighton wrote: “A survey of 502 human resource professionals, conducted in 1996 by Foresight Survey Systems International (Chicago), indicates that 63% of organizations polled did not have a well-developed management succession plan.” Jeffery Sonnefield, head of the Atlanta-based Chief Executive Leadership Institute, points out that less than one quarter of U.S. industry has robust, effective succession plans ready for unknown future contingencies. Other authorities on the subject peg the figure at less than one company in 10 (Morris-Lee, 2001).

With that large percentage of companies in the private sector not having a succession plan in place, it is no wonder that the fire service is not alone. So why is it that we do not have succession plans in place? Departments spend money on planning the department’s future through budgets, training, prevention, and personnel; however, very little is spent on the grooming of future leaders. Egos probably play a major role in
not providing succession plans. A lot of managers, once they reach the top, are in the mindset that no one can do it as good as I can. A succession crisis and lack of an effective plan can lead to organizational chaos, low employee morale, and negative press (Ross, 2002). In his summary, Ibarra writes, “Designing and implementing a comprehensive and systematic succession planning and management process remains the most viable response to the growing trend of large numbers of employees retiring” (Ibarra, 2007).

Morris-Lee writes, retention of leaders and future leaders in your organization requires an effective succession plan. Succession planning is a leadership development issue, not a management training one. Most organizations do not understand the difference. Management focuses on predictability. It relies on analyzing cause and effect, using what happened in the past for more reliable decision making in the present. Leadership, by contrast, is focused on the future. The likelihood that an organization can bring together the right players on its bench in ways that shape decision making for creating something new in developing into a leader. In short, managers reminisce the past and plan, while leaders envision the future and co-create with others realizing the future. Since leadership is the encouragement of discovery, the temporal orientation of a company sets the stage for leadership development. A successful succession plan has three essential elements: (1) assessing competency and potential, determining who is ripe for leadership development requires assessing competency based on job performance. Are your potential leaders demonstrating competency? Assessing competency, however, is retrospective and thus will only take you so far in determining who will be a successful
leader in the future. That requires assessing potential—the capacity to learn and grow; (2) measuring preferences are thinking strategies—based on whether a person prefers to be a realist, analyst, pragmatist, idealist, or synthesist—shape how people approach problems. Most of us have a preference for one problem-solving strategy, with increasingly smaller percentages comfortable with using multiple strategies. Understanding thinking styles is critical in designing a leadership development plan tailored to individual styles and needs; (3) executing the typical leadership development plan can include a number of activities—from programs conducted inside the company, to forums that bring people together from multiple divisions or organizations, to independent study and even higher education. Since every organization is unique, with different missions, people, and challenges, a cookie-cutter approach to succession plan won’t do. The best programs are custom tailored to meet specific sets of needs. The important point is that a succession plan is not a static document to be retrieved in case of emergency, but a dynamic, continually evolving process (Morris-Lee, 2001).

Since the success of planning projects relies on both executive buy-in and executive participation, it makes sense for business continuity professionals to make sure succession plans are in place. Business continuity planning is about protecting a business’ bottom line, and few things can negatively impact earnings like a lack of leadership. Imagine what would happen to a year conversion project if the project manager were hired away and left no successor? How would research and development fare if key creative forces died or left the company? In either scenario, what would be the
impact on corporate profitability? If succession plans are in place and employee development has been identified as a corporate priority, a void won’t exist for long. But without appropriate planning, a vacancy can result in a corporate shakeup as bad as any earthquake and blow through an organization with hurricane force (Vougglas, 1998).

Retention is becoming more difficult for most organizations. Minimizing the risk of losing leaders begins with assessing the reason people continue to work for an organization. Most companies use exit interviews to find out why people leave their organizations but have no reliable, ongoing way to assess why they stay. Assessing what motivates people to keep working with their current employers can have real impact on retention and human resources budgets (Morris-Lee, 2001).

Simply training more employees is not the solution to the mass exodus of talent. For too long, many public sector organizations have invested the lion’s share of their training budgets on technical or compliance training. Instead, more dollars should be invested in training employees in the so-called soft-skill areas. These soft skills—the ability to exercise good judgment, manage resources, and execute against goals and objectives—are what employers critically need to ensure the delivery of public services. Employee development must also be a component of effective succession planning management. Simply transplanting another agency’s succession plan process into your organization may be efficient and inexpensive, but it’s risky too. For a succession plan to be truly effective, it must be customized to fit your organization’s particular needs, and
that cannot be accomplished by lifting a program from another agency and dropping into your workplace (Ibarra, 2007).

The best way to build an effective succession planning program is to begin by aligning the company’s positioning, mission, and vision with the individuals best suited to carry out ‘today’ and ‘tomorrow’. Once a successor has been identified, it is imperative that a detailed transition list be put in writing and agreed to by both the incumbent and the handpicked successor (Ross, 2002).

In Ron Coleman’s article, *Today’s Grunt may be Tomorrow’s Chief*, he says we spend an awful lot of time worrying about succession planning. Maybe we ought to be worrying about making sure we are selecting those who can rise to the occasion once they have been given the opportunity. Standing at the peak of that experience of being faced with those leadership conditions, turn around and look down the chain of command. Ask yourself how well prepared people are to follow you as you move forward. In the final analysis, this is where succession planning truly begins. It is having people ready, even if they do not have the opportunity to be a leader. In our profession, there are many people who demonstrate that they are not really interested in climbing the ladder of success, especially to the top rung. It is fair to say that we literally have paid people to stay off the ladder by making working conditions more appealing at the bottom than we have at the top of the fire service. I want to recognize that all of the efforts in succession planning are blunted unless somebody is ready to step up to the plate without
being overly concerned about whether or not he or she is going to be rewarded for it (Coleman, 2008).

Many departments think that succession planning means sending people away to school. In most cases, sending people away to be educated at the community’s expense is an investment for which there is very little return. Individuals who share in the responsibility for their own succession planning don’t need to be ordered to go to school. They seek out opportunities and are willing to pursue them on their own, outside the influence of a community. Sometimes, they emerge outside the influence of the leadership of their own fire department.

Our professional lives are made up of experience and opportunity. One does not necessarily lead to the other. Success is when an individual uses the past to produce a favorable outcome in the future. That is truly what succession planning is all about (Coleman, 2008).

Operational goals are primarily for people. These goals that can be expressed in terms of specifics; they are directly measurable in scope and time factors. Developmental goals, like operational goals, are also for people, but in a more personal way. Developmental goals are concerned with the professional development of people who work on the organizational goals. The professional development of personnel through training is an important concern for all organizations. Such development enables personnel to become more competent in their current jobs and to become better qualified to accept the responsibilities of higher-level positions when they occur. An organization
made up of skilled and competent personnel who are continuing to develop themselves toward even higher levels of competency is more likely to achieve its goals than is the organization that has little or no concern for the professional growth of its personnel (NFPA, 1997).

It seems that one of the hot topics in today’s fire service is succession planning. Departments across the United States are losing senior personnel to retirement and the new kids on the block are not getting the hands-on experience the senior staff received during their tenure. It is up to the so-called senior citizens of the department, regardless of their role, to give guidance to those up-and-coming personnel.

Succession planning is a critical element of organizational strategy. Departments with well-developed employee development and planning methods are more competitive. Employees need a clear path so they may predict their future, and there is a strong need for bench strength in public safety departments.

Each department will know its strengths, thus, providing clues to its weaknesses. By using this, a department can see its strengths and where it needs to develop. Each department is unique and has a unique set of capabilities different from other departments. Once the department defines its capabilities, there is improved clarity as to where key individual competencies need to exist as well as financial, technical, and staffing priorities (NFA, 2005).

Succession planning is a process where future generations of a department are cultivated to take on additional or different responsibilities as they move around or up in
the organization. Successful succession planning programs employ a systematic approach to develop an employee’s talent. It guides the employee and establishes a pool of candidates for staffing needs.

It is important for organizations to help map an employee’s development. This mapping helps ensure employees are acquiring the knowledge, education and skills necessary for the strategic growth of the organization. There are various areas to provide this such as: allowing them to participate in a development group, allowing them to rotate through various jobs, giving them special assignments to projects to solve problems as they work to complete it, and through educational courses. The International Association of Fire Chief’s Officer Development Handbook suggests course work be completed by the employee as he/she progress through the ranks (Culp, 2008).

Procedures

This research paper employed action methodology to answer 1) What is the need for succession planning? 2) What advantage is there to an effective succession plan? 3) How do the shift personnel of IRCFR view succession planning? 4) What are other fire rescue departments in Florida doing for succession planning? 5) What are the benefits to IRCFR of developing a succession plan for replacing their chief officers? The procedures used to complete this research were literature review, a departmental questionnaire, and phone interview.

The literature review was started at the National Fire Academy’s Learning Resource Center while attending class in March/April 2008. Upon returning home the
Developing a Succession literature review continued at the Indian River County Library. The literature review looked at both private sector and fire service trade journals, magazine articles, and review of questionnaires.

To answer the question of how do the shift personnel of the Indian River County Fire Rescue Department view succession planning, a questionnaire was created (Appendix A) to get their response. This was done over a three-day period in order to get responses from all three shifts. Due to units being out of quarters, not everyone responded.

Departments throughout the state of Florida (Appendix B) were called in an effort to expedite the process instead of mailing or e-mailing. They were called to see if they had a succession plan and if they were satisfied with their plan.

In (Appendix C) is the first draft of the Indian River County Fire Rescue succession plan. It calls for an initial meeting to set goals and objectives for establishing a plan.

Limitations

There were no shortages of information on succession plans; however, there was a number of departments with plans who are not using them for various reasons.
Results

What is the need for succession planning?

One has only to pick up a magazine or newspaper, glance at a TV, pull up a favorite web site, or attend another in a seemingly endless series of retirement parties to realize the workforce is aging and, as a result, new challenges are upcoming. Ibarra goes on to say, “In the public sector, 30% of state government employees nationwide are eligible for retirement in 2006, and by 2008 more than 50% of federal government employees will be eligible for retirement” (Ibarra, 2007).

According to the definition found in the United States Fire Academy’s 1st Edition course “Executive Leadership”, succession planning is an organized and systematic way to ensure that employees in a particular organization are capable, competent, and willing to replace and/or succeed to strategic roles within the organization (National Fire Academy, 2005).

Succession planning is the future of the fire department. The time to prepare those coming up through the ranks is now. Personnel need to be educated in those job skills that they are moving towards before they arrive in that position. Even when critical employees give advance notice of retirement, resignation, or prolonged terminal illness, the company may not survive if it has not implemented a succession plan (Ross, 2002).

Business continuity planning is about protecting a business’ bottom line, and few things can negatively impact earnings like a lack of leadership (Vouglas, 1998). So many articles keep saying the same thing: prepare for the future. Indian River County
Fire Rescue and other fire rescue departments need to take heed and prepare their future leaders or face possible departmental fragmentation. A succession crisis and lack of an effective plan can lead to organizational chaos, low employee morale, and negative press (Ross, 2002).

Succession planning is a process where future generations of a department are cultivated to take on additional or different responsibilities as they move around or up in the organization (Culp, 2008).

Retention is becoming more difficult for most organizations. Minimizing the risk of losing leaders begins with assessing the reason people continue to work for an organization. Most companies use exit interviews to find out why people leave their organizations but have no reliable, ongoing way to assess why they stay. Assessing what motivates people to keep working with their current employers can have real impact on retention and human resources budgets (Morris-Lee, 2001). We need to invest more in our people and their needs than look at the day-to-day operations of the department.

With the almighty dollar doing most of the talking to many of the younger employees these days through bargaining agreements, this has become a retention dilemma for many departments.

It is fair to say that we literally have paid people to stay off the ladder by making working conditions more appealing at the bottom than we have at the top of the fire service (Coleman, 2008).
What advantage is there to having an effective succession plan?

Succession planning is a critical element of organizational strategy. Departments with well-developed employee development and planning methods are more competitive. Each department will know its strengths providing clues to its weakness. By using this, a department can see its strengths and where it needs to develop. Each department is unique and has a unique set of capabilities different from other departments. Once the department defines its capabilities, there is improved clarity as to where key individual competencies need to exist as well as financial, technical, and staffing priorities (NFA, 2005). Having an effective plan in place will provide the department with the knowledge of providing the department and the community competent future leaders.

Successful succession planning programs employ a systematic approach to develop an employee’s talent. It guides the employee and establishes a pool of candidates for staffing needs. It is important for organizations to help map an employee’s development. This mapping helps ensure employees are acquiring the knowledge, education and skills necessary for the strategic growth of the organization (Culp, 2008).

How do the shift personnel of the IRCFR view succession planning?

A questionnaire was sent out to the personnel asking what their views were on the department’s succession plan. There were 92 responses. All but two said they felt it was up to the department to prepare the future leaders by providing education to meet the needs. Assessing what motivates people to keep working with their current
employers can have real impact on retention and human resources budgets (Morris-Lee, 2001). The best way to build an effective succession planning program is to begin by aligning the company’s positioning, mission, and vision with the individuals best suited to carry out ‘today’ and ‘tomorrow’ (Ross, 2002).

For too long, many public sector organizations have invested the lion’s share of their training budgets on technical or compliance training. Instead, more dollars should be invested in training employees in the so-called soft-skill areas. These soft skills—the ability to exercise good judgment, manage resources, and execute against goals and objectives—are what employers critically need to ensure the delivery of public services. Employee development must also be a component of effective succession planning management. Simply transplanting another agency’s succession plan process into your organization may be efficient and inexpensive, but it’s risky too. For a succession plan to be truly effective, it must be customized to fit your organization’s particular needs, and that cannot be accomplished by lifting a program from another agency and dropping into your workplace (Ibarra, 2007).

When asked if it was solely the responsibility of the employee to prepare himself/herself for future advancement, 30 respondents agreed that it was the employee’s responsibility to prepare themselves for future advancement and 62 said they felt it was up to the department to prepare them. A number wrote that the responsibility belongs to both parties. Another question asked how many were taking classes to better themselves
for future advancement opportunities. Forty-five respondents said they were seeking further education and 47 were not.

Many departments think that succession planning means sending people away to school. In most cases, sending people away to be educated at the community’s expense is an investment for which there is very little return. Individuals who share in the responsibility for their own succession planning don’t need to be ordered to go to school. They seek out opportunities and are willing to pursue them on their own, outside the influence of a community. Sometimes, they emerge outside the influence of the leadership of their own fire department (Coleman, 2008).

Succession planning is a process where future generations of a department are cultivated to take on additional or different responsibilities as they move around or up in the organization. Successful succession planning programs employ a systematic approach to develop an employee’s talent. It guides the employee and establishes a pool of candidates for staffing needs. It is important for organizations to help map an employee’s development. This mapping helps ensure employees are acquiring the knowledge, education and skills necessary for the strategic growth of the organization (Culp, 2008).

Departments spend money on planning the department’s future through budgets, training, prevention, and personnel; however, very little is spent on the grooming of future leaders (Ross, 2002).
Operational goals are primarily for people. These goals that can be expressed in terms of specifics; they are directly measurable in scope and time factors. Developmental goals, like operational goals, are also for people, but in a more personal way. Developmental goals are concerned with the professional development of people who work on the organizational goals. The professional development of personnel through training is an important concern for all organizations. Such development enables personnel to become more competent in their current jobs and to become better qualified to accept the responsibilities of higher-level positions when they occur. An organization made up of skilled and competent personnel who are continuing to develop themselves toward even higher levels of competency is more likely to achieve its goals than is the organization that has little or no concern for the professional growth of its personnel (NFPA, 1997).

What are other fire rescue departments in Florida doing for succession planning?

Of the 10 departments contacted, only three had a succession plan in place. They all agreed that there was a need for one. Victor R. Buzzotta and Robert E. Lefton wrote: “A survey of 502 human resource professionals, conducted in 1996 by Foresight Survey Systems International (Chicago), indicates that 63% of organizations polled did not have a well-developed management succession plan.” Jeffery Sonnefield, head of the Atlanta-based Chief Executive Leadership Institute, points out, less than one quarter of U.S. industry has robust, effective succession plans ready for unknown future contingencies.
Other authorities on the subject peg the figure at less than one company in 10 (Morris-Lee, 2001). Asked if their departments were looking to implement a succession plan in the future, three responded that they were not. The range of education required for the chief officer position varied from none to a Bachelors degree. All promote from within the department; however, they will appoint the chief’s position if there is no one qualified.

In the final analysis, this is where succession planning truly begins. It is having people ready, even if they do not have the opportunity to be a leader. In our profession, there are many people who demonstrate that they are not really interested in climbing the ladder of success, especially to the top rung. It is fair to say that we literally have paid people to stay off the ladder by making working conditions more appealing at the bottom than we have at the top of the fire service. I want to recognize that all of the efforts in succession planning are blunted unless somebody is ready to step up to the plate without being overly concerned about whether or not he or she is going to be rewarded for it. Many departments think that succession planning means sending people away to school. In most cases, sending people away to be educated at the community’s expense is an investment for which there is very little return (Coleman, 2008).

What are the benefits to IRCFR for developing a succession plan for replacing its chief officers?
Ibarra writes, “Designing and implementing a comprehensive and systematic succession planning and management process remains the most viable response to the growing trend of large numbers of employees retiring” (Ibarra, 2007).

Retention of leaders and future leaders in your organization requires an effective succession plan. Since every organization is unique, with different missions, people, and challenges, a cookie-cutter approach to succession plan won’t do. The best programs are custom tailored to meet specific sets of needs. The important point is that a succession plan is not a static document to be retrieved in case of emergency, but a dynamic, continually evolving process (Morris-Lee, 2001).

Departments with well-developed employee development and planning methods are more competitive. Employees need a clear path so they may predict their future, and there is a strong need for bench strength in public safety departments.

Each department will know its strengths, thus providing clues to its weaknesses. By using this, a department can see its strengths and where it needs to develop. Each department is unique and has a unique set of capabilities different from other departments. Once the department defines its capabilities, there is improved clarity as to where key individual competencies need to exist as well as financial, technical, and staffing priorities (NFA, 2005). A succession crisis and lack of an effective plan can lead to organizational chaos, low employee morale, and negative press (Ross, 2002).
Discussion

There is a need for Indian River County Fire Rescue to develop a succession plan to prepare for the retirement of its chief officers. As stated in many articles, those departments that do not have a succession plan are looking for problems down the road.

Even when critical employees give advance notice of retirement, resignation, or prolonged terminal illness, the company may not survive if it has not implemented a succession plan. A succession crisis and lack of an effective plan can lead to organizational chaos, low employee morale, and negative press (Ross, 2002).

Designing and implementing a comprehensive and systematic succession planning and management process remains the most viable response to the growing trend of large numbers of employees retiring (Ibarra, 2007). From the departmental questionnaire responses, the personnel agree that there needs to be a formal plan so they know what they can do to prepare for their future. Minimizing the risk of losing leaders begins with the assessing the reason people continue to work for an organization. Assessing what motivates people to keep working with their current employers can have real impact on retention and human resources budgets (Morris-Lee, 2001).

Labor and management must take a hard look to see what it will take to develop a plan. Employee development must also be a component of effective succession planning management. Simply transplanting another agency’s succession plan process into your organization may be efficient and inexpensive, but it’s risky too. For a succession plan to be truly effective, it must be customized to fit your organization’s particular needs, and
that cannot be accomplished by lifting a program from another agency and dropping into your workplace (Ibarra, 2007).

In Ron Coleman’s article, *Today’s Grunt may be Tomorrow’s Chief*, he says, “We spend an awful lot of time worrying about succession planning. Maybe we ought to be worrying about making sure we are selecting those who can rise to the occasion once they have been given the opportunity. Standing at the peak of that experience of being faced with those leadership conditions, turn around and look down the chain of command. Ask yourself how well prepared people are to follow you as you move forward.”

Operational goals are primarily for people. These goals that can be expressed in terms of specifics; they are directly measurable in scope and time factors. Developmental goals, like operational goals, are also for people, but in a more personal way. Developmental goals are concerned with the professional development of people who work on the organizational goals. The professional development of personnel through training is an important concern for all organizations. Such development enables personnel to become more competent in their current jobs and to become better qualified to accept the responsibilities of higher-level positions when they occur. An organization made up of skilled and competent personnel who are continuing to develop themselves toward even higher levels of competency is more likely to achieve its goals than is the organization that has little or no concern for the professional growth of its personnel.
Developing a Succession (NFPA, 1997). How much more needs to be said, IRCFR need to develop a succession plan that is specific to their department.

The lack of developing a plan will result in a dysfunctional department. A succession crisis and lack of an effective plan can lead to organizational chaos, low employee morale, and negative press (Ross, 2002).

If succession plans are in place and employee development has been identified as a corporate priority, a void won’t exist for long. But without appropriate planning, a vacancy can result in a corporate shakeup as bad as any earthquake and blow through an organization with hurricane force (Vouglas, 1998).

The findings in the literature review and the answers to the questionnaires show the need for IRCFR department to move forward with developing a succession plan. The department is going to lose many of its senior chiefs in the next few years. There were 92 responses to the question: Do you think the department should prepare you for the future? All but two said they felt it was up to the department to prepare the future leaders by providing the proper education.

Succession planning is a process where future generations of a department are cultivated to take on additional or different responsibilities as they move around or up in the organization. Successful succession planning programs employ a systematic approach to develop an employee’s talent. It guides the employee and establishes a pool of candidates for staffing needs. It is important for organizations to help map an employee’s development. This mapping helps ensure employees are acquiring the
knowledge, education and skills necessary for the strategic growth of the organization. There are various areas to provide this such as: allowing them to participate in a development group, allowing them to rotate through various jobs, giving them special assignments to projects to solve problems as they work to complete it, and through educational courses (Culp, 2008). The implication of this research is that there is a desire of the personnel for a succession plan. The Indian River County Fire Rescue department needs to take a hard look at the need for coming up with a successful succession plan.

Employee development must also be a component of effective succession planning management. Simply transplanting another agency’s succession plan process into your organization may be efficient and inexpensive, but it’s risky too. For a succession plan to be truly effective, it must be customized to fit your organization’s particular needs, and that cannot be accomplished by lifting a program from another agency and dropping into your workplace (Ibarra, 2007).

Labor and management need to work together on this project to have total buy-in by both groups. There are many departments that have written succession plans only to find them being put on the shelf because one or both sides cannot come to an agreement. It may cost the department overtime for backfill in order to get the training required. It may cost the employee some of his/her personal time in order to get the needed course work completed. It will take sacrifices from both sides in order to make the plan work. This research also brought to light the low morale within the department in the lack of junior officers wanting to move to a chief officers position. Many of the personnel said
they could not see the monetary value in taking a chief’s job, giving up so many of the bargaining unit’s perks.

Departments spend money on planning the department’s future through budgets, training, prevention, and personnel; however, very little is spent on the grooming of future leaders. A succession crisis and lack of an effective plan can lead to organizational chaos, low employee morale, and negative press (Ross, 2002).

Recommendations

The recommendations to the department are as follows:

1) Establish a committee to start the process of developing a succession plan.

2) Develop a working plan specific to IRCFR.

3) Set a time frame with which to measure progress and meeting goals.

4) Re-evaluate the plan and make changes as necessary.

There needs to be a joint committee made up of management and labor to develop criteria for a succession plan that will be specific to Indian River County Fire Rescue. The best programs are custom tailored to meet specific sets of needs. The important point is that a succession plan is not a static document to be retrieved in case of emergency, but a dynamic, continually evolving process (Morris-Lee, 2001).

IRCFR must develop its own plan that is specific to its department. According to Ibarra, “Simply transplanting another agency’s succession plan process into your organization may be efficient and inexpensive, but it’s risky too. For a succession plan to be truly effective, it must be customized to fit your organization’s particular needs, and
that cannot be accomplished by lifting a program from another agency and dropping into your workplace” (Ibarra, 2007).

There needs to be a time frame set up to measure the progress in meeting the goals of developing the succession plan. Operational goals are primarily for people. These goals that can be expressed in terms of specifics; they are directly measurable in scope and time factors. Developmental goals, like operational goals, are also for people, but in a more personal way. Developmental goals are concerned with the professional development of people who work on the organizational goals. The professional development of personnel through training is an important concern for all organizations. Such development enables personnel to become more competent in their current jobs and to become better qualified to accept the responsibilities of higher-level positions when they occur. An organization made up of skilled and competent personnel who are continuing to develop themselves toward even higher levels of competency is more likely to achieve its goals than is the organization that has little or no concern for the professional growth of its personnel (NFPA, 1997).

Since the plan is a work in progress, there must be a measurable timetable put in place to re-evaluate the plan. It is important for organizations to help map an employee’s development. This mapping helps ensure employees are acquiring the knowledge, education and skills necessary for the strategic growth of the organization (Culp, 2008).

In the final analysis, this is where succession planning truly begins. It is having people ready, even if they do not have the opportunity to be a leader. In our profession,
there are many people who demonstrate that they are not really interested in climbing the
ladder of success, especially to the top rung. It is fair to say that we literally have paid
people to stay off the ladder by making working conditions more appealing at the bottom
than we have at the top of the fire service (Coleman, 2008).
References


Culp, H. (2008, March). Career Road Map: Having officers with resumes that show diversity provides organizations the opportunity to advance personnel into vacated positions. *Fire Chief*, 52 (3) 40-43


I am requesting your input on the subject of succession planning. Succession Planning can be defined as an organized and systematic way to ensure that employees in an organization are capable, competent, and willing to replace and/or succeed to strategic roles within the organization. Thank you, Assistant Chief Prime

Personal Information: Please circle the best answer.

1) Years of service with IRCFR: 0-5 6-10 11-15 16-20 20+

2) Years until eligible for retirement: 0-5 6-10 11-15 16-20 20+

3) Current Rank: Medic FF Eng LT Capt. B/C

Please circle the best answer from your perspective using the scale provided to the following questions.

1—Strongly agree
2—Agree
3—Disagree
4—Strongly disagree

1) It is the Department’s responsibility to prepare the future leaders through providing education.

1 2 3 4
2) A well-run department develops its workforce and encourages future internal advancement and promotions.

1 2 3 4

3) It is the sole responsibility of the employee to prepare himself/herself for future advancement.

1 2 3 4

4) IRCFR has established clear expectations for required educational and time-in- service milestones for advancement to the next rank.

1 2 3 4

5) The promotional process currently used by the IRCFR promotes the best candidate for the job.

1 2 3 4

6) I was eligible to test in the last promotional testing process.

Y N

7) I plan to test for the next promotional test that I am qualified for.

Y N

8) I have discussed my future plans with my supervisor.

Y N

9) I am currently taking class to better my advancement opportunities.

Y N

10) What is the highest rank you plan to obtain?

Eng. Lt. Capt. B/C A/C
Appendix B

1) Does your Department have a formal Succession Plan?  Y  N

2) Do you think there is a need for a Succession Plan?  Y  N

3) Does your department have a Chief Officer development program?  
   Y  N

4) If no to # 1, is your department considering implementing one in the future? Y  N

5) What degrees for Chief Officer does your department require?
   High School diploma
   AS/AA degree
   BS/BA degree
   Master degree
   None

6) What other certifications are required for Chief Officers? Please list.

7) Does your department promote through the ranks or appoint?

8) What experience is required?
   EMS____________________ years
   Fire Ground______________ years
   Prevention_______________ years
   Investigations____________ years
   None___________________
Appendix C

The following is the first draft of Indian River County Fire Rescue Department’s succession plan. The recommendations as a result of the research paper are as follows:

1) To establish a working committee to develop a plan.

2) The committee shall be made up of junior and senior officers within the department.

3) Once the draft plan has been formalized, it will be presented to the fire chief for implementation.

4) When and if there are no problems, the plan will be put in place for a six-month trial period.

5) After the six-month period, the original committee will meet to evaluate the succession plan and either add or delete items from it.

6) After the six-month review and corrections, the plan will be put out for another six-month period.

7) If there are no outstanding issues, the recommendation is for the department to put the succession plan in place.