

Employee Retention in a Combination Fire 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.

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Abstract

The Urbandale Fire Department (UFD) has experienced an increased turnover of part-time (PT) and paid-on-call (POC) employees. The purpose of this Applied Research Project (ARP) was to identify reasons why UFD has difficulty retaining PT and POC employees. The following research questions were developed to attain results using the Descriptive Research Method: a) What are the challenges to employee retention in non-fire organizations who utilize PT personnel? b) What are the experiences of other departments with a similar profile to UFD in regards to employee retention? c) What impacts do the demographics of Urbandale have on the retention of PT and POC employees? d) What reasons do current PT and POC employees have for being on the Urbandale Fire Department? e) What reasons do PT and POC employees give for leaving UFD?

Questionnaires were given to current and former UFD employees, as well as other combination fire departments with a profile similar to Urbandale. Interviews were conducted with other non-fire service organizations in Urbandale to obtain their experiences with employee retention. A literature review and comparison of demographic data was also used to compare Urbandale to other organizations and communities. Results of these procedures yielded that UFD employees have needs and perceptions comparable to all organization types. UFD employees identified training requirements, pay/benefits, and UFD personnel as primary reasons for the increased employee turnover.

Establishing a formal exit interview process, an employee development program, and initiating a pay/benefit evaluation were identified as ways to address the perceived causes of increased turnover at UFD.

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Introduction

Finding and retaining quality employees is the goal of most organizations. This is extremely critical for fire departments that utilize full time (FT), part time (PT), and paid-on-call (POC) employees. The fire service in many areas of the United States has had great success in recruiting and retaining employees for many years. But is our mobile and fast-paced society having an impact on fire departments across the country? People seem to have less time to commit to organizations such as fire departments and EMS services.

But is time commitment the real reason the fire service is having difficulty retaining quality employees? It certainly seems like the most logical conclusion when you think about the time commitment involved with things like training, fund raising, public education, and emergency responses. In a time of economic downturn, it would seem plausible that there are enough people that could join fire departments. But volunteer and combination fire departments across the United States have been hit hard by the economy and dwindling ranks. Reduced or eliminated training budgets, equipment shortages, and in a few cases – complete closure or consolidation of fire departments.

Can scenarios such as this also impact employee retention? One common attribute of firefighters is the sense of belonging to an organization or group. But when there is not enough support for that organization or group members become detached. They feel their contributions aren't recognized or appreciated. Employees can be on the defensive and feel they don't have a voice in the organization. Eventually, some of the members will leave. This is when the work really begins for fire department administration, especially if they are not used to having employees leave the fire department. This has been the scenario for the Urbandale Fire Department since 2008.

The problem is the Urbandale Fire Department has experienced an increased turnover of PT and POC employees. The purpose of this research is to identify reasons why UFD has difficulty retaining PT and POC employees. Descriptive research will be used to answer the following questions and develop recommendations to address the employee retention issue at UFD: a) What are the challenges to employee retention in other non-fire organizations who utilize PT personnel? b) What are the experiences of other departments with a similar profile to UFD in regards to employee retention? c) What impacts do the demographics of Urbandale have on the retention of PT and POC employees? d) What reasons do current PT and POC employees have for being on the Urbandale Fire Department? e) What reasons do PT and POC employees give for leaving UFD? For a department that consistently has an increase in call volume and city growth, it would appear there would be sufficient employees available. But the opposite has been true. We have not been able to pinpoint why there has been an increase in turnover.

Background and Significance

The City of Urbandale is a northwest suburb of the Des Moines metropolitan area. There has been significant growth among the Des Moines suburbs for the past ten years. Because of the dramatic growth the City of Urbandale completed a special census in 2005 that showed its population at 35,904 compared to 29,072 in 2000. The Urbandale Fire Department is a combination department comprised of 17 full time (FT), 11 PT, and 12 POC employees as of March 2010. The employees operate out of two fire stations that cover 22 square miles. UFD employees responded to 2,377 calls for service and completed 7,507 hours of training in 2009 (UFD Annual Report, 2009). As the City of Urbandale has grown, the PT & POC ranks of the Urbandale Fire Department have decreased. This has been especially problematic since May of 2008 when UFD started to see a significant rise in the turnover of PT and POC employees.

From May 2008 to December 2009, 17 PT and POC employees resigned from UFD. The Urbandale Fire Department does not have a formal exit interview process for employees who leave. However, when the UFD Administration asked these employees the reason for leaving, the most common response was that they could not meet the time commitment necessary to be a member of the department. This was puzzling for the UFD Administration who has worked diligently to reduce the required number of hours for PT and POC employees by initiatives such as crew assignments, multiple training sessions, and extensive outreach to have PT and POC employees be more involved with committees, public education events, and the overall direction of the fire department.

The increase in employee turnover has a significant impact on the response capabilities of UFD. A greater reliance on mutual aid has been necessary because UFD has an insufficient number of employees to staff apparatus. Daily in-station staffing for UFD ranges from 4-7 employees between both fire stations. With the significant decrease in POC staff, it is rare that UFD can staff a second suppression unit to a fire incident. In the event of multiple calls or structure fires UFD must rely heavily on mutual aid to assist or handle the calls for service. While the staffing inadequacies greatly affect our external customers, the impact is also significant on our internal customers – our employees who know that we cannot adequately staff apparatus available at our fire stations.

UFD had taken a pro-active approach to retaining employees before the increase in turnover started in 2008. Initiatives such as ads in movie theaters, television commercials, and citizen's water bills were done in an effort to help recruit UFD employees. Unfortunately, these initiatives did not assist in gaining employees. Over the past 10 years many changes have occurred to the pay scales of PT and POC employees to help reward them for their service.

Employees that receive thank you letters from customers receive recognition from the Fire Chief, who then shares the information with the rest of the department. Employees are eligible for a variety of awards at the annual appreciation banquet.

Yet, departing employees keep saying that the issue is time commitment. Are the departing employees being truthful? Is UFD really doing all it can to retain PT and POC employees? UFD can't be the only Des Moines area fire department that is having this issue. These are the questions UFD continues to ask. As a customer service based organization UFD strives to bring professionalism to all services that we provide. We want to be the department that others are measured by. The only way this can be achieved is through the retention of quality employees. PT and POC employees will be a component of our staffing well into the future. Additional FT employees have been added as a result of retention issues with PT and POC employees. But, the number of FT employees added has been significantly less than the numbers of PT and POC employees that have left the department over the last several years.

The issue of employee retention relates to the topic of leadership that was a key component of the Executive Development class. In the case of the Urbandale Fire Department, employee retention has become an adaptive challenge that remains frustrating. Typically, people view employee retention as a technical problem rather than an adaptive challenge. If you make the employees happy, you won't have to worry about them leaving the organization, right? If you throw all the technical fixes you can imagine at the problem and the problem persists, it's a pretty clear signal that an underlying adaptive challenge needs to be addressed (Heifetz & Linsky, 2002). It takes adaptive leaders to address adaptive challenges. Many of the problems our customers call us for are technical problems: my house is on fire – put water on it; I'm having chest pain – give them oxygen and pain medications. So much of our thinking takes

place in this realm of leadership and problem solving. But how do leaders react when the oxygen and pain medication doesn't help the chest pain, or the water doesn't seem to be putting out the fire? How does an adaptive leader handle those situations?

Employee retention for the Urbandale Fire Department is an adaptive challenge. Some consider leadership to be an improvisational art. Outside-the-box thinking has been tried on many occasions since June of 2008. It would be easy to say the employee retention problem is because the community doesn't care about the fire department or they don't want to spend the time to be trained. But adaptive leaders know this is not the way to address an adaptive challenge. When you are too quick to lay blame on others, whether inside or outside the community, you create risks for yourself (Heifetz & Linsky, 2002). The Urbandale Fire Department has not given up on how to retain PT and POC employees. The greatest challenge is identifying how we can better retain employees in an ever-changing environment. A strong core of adaptive leaders can make this happen.

The issue of employee retention also relates to the United States Fire Administration's (USFA) Operational Goals and Objectives. The five USFA goals can only be possible if fire departments can retain quality employees. The Urbandale Fire Department's Mission and Vision statements closely resemble those of the USFA. USFA Operational Goal #1 states: "Reduce risk at the local level through prevention and mitigation" (USFA Strategic Plan, 2010). Increased employee turnover has an equal impact on the ability to provide effective fire prevention strategies. When the Urbandale Fire Department doesn't have enough employees to respond to emergencies, it also doesn't have enough employees to take proactive approaches in the community to reduce the impact of fire. Organizations like the USFA and the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) have a wealth of resources available to help reduce risk at the

local level through prevention and mitigation. But without the human resources to facilitate the safety messages, customers do not get the full value that a fire department can and should be able to provide them. This will be a continuous frustration for UFD if we continue to lose PT and POC employees.

Reducing risk is also paramount while employees are operating on the fire ground. With minimal staffing, there have been occasions where UFD has not been able to enter a structure due to a delay from not having enough personnel to meet department safety standards addressing imminent danger to life and health (IDLH) environments. Even with additional FT employees there will still be a large void compared to UFD staffing several years ago. In 2005, there were a total of 32 POC employees. At the end of 2009 there were 12 POC employees at the Urbandale Fire Department. The reduction in employees will affect the department for many years to come, unless we can find ways to retain employees better.

Literature Review

Employee retention affects organizations of every shape and size. While every occupational field seems to have certain qualities that impact employee retention the vast majority of literature on the topic seems to point to a few commonalities regardless of the occupation or employment classification. Over the last few years there has been a wide range of literature that has showed organizational commitment, employee recognition, and supervisors are key to the successful retention of employees. There are also other principles and drivers of retention that affect all employee classification levels.

In a combination fire department having different employee classifications can create challenges for organizational commitment of employees. Research on psychological empowerment and job satisfaction indicate that employer expectations of the employee can have

a significant impact. Showing employees how their jobs fit into the organization and how the tasks they complete affect outcomes of the company may increase their perception of meaning (Dickson & Lorenz, 2009). PT and POC employees bring a wealth of experiences to the organization, but these experiences must be able to fit into the mission and vision of the organization.

Organizational commitment involves the day-to-day operations of an organization. As an organization changes it is critical that all employees have the opportunity to participate in decisions. Integrating different employee classifications requires organizations to create environments that are conducive for all parties. For PT professionals to be effective members of a workgroup dominant patterns of interaction rituals may need to be reformulated so that part-timers are able to participate as fully as possible and, just as importantly, be perceived by co-workers as legitimate members of the workgroup in good standing (Corwin & Lawrence, 2003). Rituals such as meetings and social functions have to be modified to ensure the opportunity exists for employees to participate in the organization.

Maynard and Joseph (2006) found that organizational commitment is typically conceptualized as being comprised of three parts: affective (one's emotional attachment to the organization), continuance (the costs associated with leaving the organization), and normative (a sense of duty or obligation to remain with the organization). Their research also indicated increased flexibility and lower staffing costs may explain the increasing proportion of PT jobs. Organizations should consider that there may be hidden costs associated with such jobs, as many contingent workers may prefer more standard work arrangements, and experience negative job attitudes as a result. There must be an acceptable person-job fit for employees in the organization. Empirical evidence has generally supported the theoretical proposition that fit will

be associated with desirable individual and organizational outcomes, such as psychological and physical health, positive job attitudes, better job performance, and less employee withdrawal (Maynard & Joseph, 2006).

So what do employees want at their workplace? They want to be recognized as legitimate participants in the workplace. Freeman and Rogers (2006) found even workers whose management had instituted employee involvement committees to consult with them on workplace decisions wanted more voice and power in the process. Only a minority of workers – 10 percent to 15 percent, depending on the particular question – did not want more collective voice at the workplace. Their survey of U.S. worker “wants” revealed that American workers want more of a say/influence at the workplace than they have now, greater workplace participation as individuals and as part of a group, cooperative relations with management, and some measure of independence and protection of that independence in dealings with management. Workers believe that management resistance is the primary reason they do not have their desired level of influence at the workplace (Freeman & Rogers, 2006).

Research also points to internal and external drivers of employee retention. Retention happens when employees receive things they value that they believe they cannot get anywhere else, and these things create reasons for them to stay (Finnegan, 2010). Edwards and Phillips (2008) found external factors such as economic growth, shortage of special skills, and slower growth of job seekers hinder employee retention. Internal factors that have a tremendous impact include lack of company loyalty, desire for all types of benefits, desire for competitive compensation, and the need for work/life balance. These factors can often lead an employee to make a change early on in an organization. If they do not see the possibilities or believe that the

organization and manager are not thinking about what is next for them, then they have little reason to stay (Federman, 2009).

Communication in the workplace can also influence this as well. What employees need to do their jobs and what makes them feel respected and included dictate that very few restrictions be placed by managers on the flow of information (Burke & Cooper, 2008). Listening to employees concerns and understanding their limitations is key to successful employee relations. Little things keep members active and happy; little things make your community love and support you (Winn, 2007). These “little things” may be organization specific. Initiatives such as a strategic plan can help employees have a sense of ownership in the department’s mission and vision.

Determining why people leave an organization is not as simplistic as one may think. Holtom, Mitchell, Lee, and Inderrieden (2005) found that precipitating events, or shocks, cause voluntary departure more often than accumulated job dissatisfaction. Shocks either can be personal events that are external to the job or events that are job related or organizational in nature. An employee’s interpretation of the shock depends on the social and cognitive context that surrounds the shock experience (Holtom et al., 2005). Employers should not disregard job dissatisfaction as an antecedent of employee turnover. Shocks offer additional insights for organizations concerned about employee retention. Knowledge about shocks and their attributes may provide guidance as to how quitting unfolds over time, and how a manager may best respond to improve the likelihood of retention.

Branham (2005) found that early signs of employee disengagement typically start showing up after a shocking or jarring event takes place that causes the employee to question his or her commitment. Types of events that may trigger disengagement include: realizing that the

job is not as promised, being asked to do something unethical, uncaring leadership, unwanted change in job duties, and work-life imbalance. Analyzing 3,149 employee exit survey responses Branham (2005) found that very few of the “reasons” for turnover were based on reasoned thinking – they were mostly rooted in strong feelings.

Employee retention strategies can also be aligned with processes such as Goldratt’s thinking process. This is a series of steps used to locate the constraint (What to Change?), determine the solution (What to change to?) and how to implement the solution (How to make the change?). This thinking process was used in the City of Odessa, Texas that experienced an increased turnover of public safety employees. Goldratt’s process was used to help eliminate the true core problems of retention, not just look to find a compromise to deal with the situation. Murphy, Price, and Taylor (2006) found if the city recognizes employees that exceed requirements on evaluations, make them feel appreciated for dangerous and specialized work, and reward with monetary rewards or additional vacation days then the police and fire/EMS personnel think the city organization cares about them and they will feel like they fit with the current management style or philosophies and will not terminate with the city.

Supervisors play a key role in employee retention. As a general rule effective supervision plus good employee programs equal high retention, but poor supervision will trump good programs most of the time (Finnegan, 2010). Federman (2009) found the most common reason employees leave because of career development issues is due to poor practices at their existing employers. Organizations that truly believe in career development invest in training their managers to grow their people, and they train their employees to grow themselves. Most people change jobs, not because they are seeking more money, but because of dissatisfaction with their bosses (Taylor & Stern, 2009).

Employers need to be able to market their organization to current and prospective employees. Taylor and Stern (2009) found one of the most effective ways to stem employee departure is to encourage your staff to fall in love with the company in four steps: a) Reward people fairly and in line with the marketplace. b) Treat staff well; focus on recognizing every employee's contributions. c) Train employees and improve skills on their current job. d) Develop your most talented employees whom you think have leadership potential. The authors of this research also note that pay is not often the decider to what attracts a person to an organization. Once hired, most people won't leave for a 5 percent or even a 10 percent hike, which after taxes becomes almost indistinguishable (Taylor & Stern, 2009).

Employee retention is also viewed as a process of multiple levels. Social exchange theory, a popular theoretical basis in organizational studies, is one example of how to examine employee retention at multiple levels. Social exchange theory states person "A's" behavior reinforces person "B's" behavior, and vice versa, thereby maintaining the relationship. The employee and employer could be deemed as two participants in a social exchange relationship. If managers or supervisors show concern for their employee and foster their development, a reciprocal relationship may form such that the employees, particularly PT employees who may not feel "connected" to the organization, will feel "connected" and "repay" their managers and organization as exhibited through retention levels (Gentry, Kuhnert, Mondore, & Page, 2007). However, expectations of success may need to be tempered based on the environment in which the organization exists. The external environment may affect organizational outcomes, no matter what occurs internally in the organization (Gentry et al., 2007).

In summary, the literature review provided research pertinent to the issue of retaining employees and the challenges it presents to employees and employers. The research showed that retention is a dynamic process that occurs on multiple levels.

Procedures

This Applied Research Project (ARP) utilized the Descriptive Research Method to recommend a course of action regarding the retention of PT and POC employees at UFD. The process to design the project, attain information, organize, interpret information, and make recommendations involved several steps.

The process began by developing three questionnaires to attain information from current and former UFD employees along with other combination fire departments in Central Iowa. The first questionnaire (Appendix B) was distributed on March 18, 2010 to the 22 POC and PT employees at UFD. It contained a cover letter that provided information about the ARP. The employees were instructed to complete the questionnaire by April 9, 2010. In an effort to provide anonymity, the employees were asked to place their completed questionnaire in a secure box at each fire station. The questionnaire focused on the following topics: a) The employee's reasons for remaining at UFD. b) Does the employee feel UFD has a high turnover of PT and POC employees? c) The employee's involvement with recruitment and retention. d) What would help better retain employees? e) What is the future of PT and POC employees at UFD?

The purpose of the questionnaire was to provide the author with a base set of information related to current attitudes and beliefs on employee retention at UFD. Aside from annual performance evaluations, there is no other formal procedure in place at UFD that explores the employee's beliefs on issues such as employee retention. The information attained from the questionnaire can allow UFD to use it as a benchmark for future study on employee retention.

The second questionnaire (Appendix C) was mailed on March 19, 2010 to the 17 POC and PT employees at UFD that resigned between May 2008 and December 2009. This time period represents the most concentrated amount of employee resignations UFD has seen in the past several years. The questionnaire contained a cover letter that provided information about the ARP. The former employees were instructed to complete the questionnaire by April 9, 2010. In an effort to provide anonymity, the employees were asked to place their completed questionnaire in the pre-paid envelope provided and mail it to UFD. The questionnaire focused on the following topics: a) The employee's reasons for leaving UFD. b) Did the employee feel UFD had a high turnover of employees? c) The employee's involvement with recruitment and retention while employed at UFD. d) What would help better retain employees at UFD? e) Would the employee consider returning to UFD?

The Urbandale Fire Department does not conduct formal exit interviews with employees that resign from the department. Interviews are usually done on an informal basis when the employee provides a letter of resignation. The information attained from this questionnaire could be used as a benchmark for future study of employee retention at UFD.

The third questionnaire (Appendix A) was mailed to 10 combination fire departments that have similar characteristics to the City of Urbandale. The departments are in rapidly growing, suburban areas. All 10 departments have some FT employees, but still rely heavily on PT and POC employees for day-to-day operations. Nine of the departments are located within 25 miles of Urbandale and several are utilized for mutual aid responses to Urbandale. The questionnaire focused on the following topics: a) Does the department have enough PT and POC employees to meet the demands for service? b) Does the department currently have mentoring and/or employee development programs? c) What is the average retention for PT and POC employees?

d) What reasons do employees give for leaving the department? e) What future retention challenges does the department expect? f) What initiatives has the department done to help retain PT and POC employees?

The questionnaires present limitations that must be acknowledged. Of the 22 questionnaires given to current employees, only 13 completed and returned the questionnaire for a response rate of 59%. This may be viewed as an insufficient response rate to analyze the results of the questionnaire. Of the 17 questionnaires that were mailed to former employees, 14 were returned to UFD for a response rate of 82%. While anonymity was paramount with the questionnaire, the former employees may still have been reluctant to provide truthful data based on their experience while employed at UFD. The small sample size may also be viewed as insufficient for analysis purposes. Of the 10 questionnaires sent to combination fire departments, nine were returned for a response rate of 90%. The small sample size may be viewed as insufficient for analysis purposes. However, the 10 departments were identified as the closest demographically to the City of Urbandale and the staffing of the fire department.

The next process entailed retrieving literature resources on the topic of employee retention. Initial subject searches were completed on Internet search engines such as Google[™] and Bing[™]. The Learning Resource Center (LRC) at the National Fire Academy (NFA) was also used to find literature sources. A majority of the literature used for this ARP was attained from Cowles Library at Drake University in Des Moines, Iowa and the Urbandale Public Library.

Data was retrieved from the U.S. Census Bureau website on the cities that questionnaires were sent to. Data attained included population, median age, median household income, and education level. The purpose of this data is to provide an analysis of the community demographics as they relate to the respective fire departments. The data can be used in

conjunction with the questionnaire to provide a more in-depth analysis of how community demographics reflect fire department staffing.

In order to gain insight into the experiences of other non-fire organizations that employ PT employees, interviews were conducted with Human Resource (HR) managers of Urbandale businesses. Two interviews were conducted with HR managers of healthcare businesses in Urbandale. The third interview was with the HR manager of a large furniture retailer in Urbandale. Since there are no other fire departments in Urbandale, there is no other “competitor” in which to provide a comparison. The author felt that the experiences of other allied health providers such as nurses and medical staff would be beneficial in the discussion of employee retention. The retail business choice was utilized as a way to analyze which, if any, employee retention characteristics are present regardless of the occupancy type.

The interviews were completed over a 3-week period from April 28, 2010 to May 19, 2010. The interviewees received an email prior to the interview date that detailed the ARP, and a list of questions was provided to give the interviewee an idea of the topics that would be discussed (Appendix D). The topics included: a) Does the organization have enough PT and POC employees to meet the demands for service? b) Does the organization currently have mentoring and/or employee development programs? c) What is the average retention for PT and POC employees? d) What reasons do employees give for leaving the organization? e) What future retention challenges does the organization expect? f) What initiatives has the organization done to help retain PT and POC employees? The interviews were conducted in the office of each respective HR manager and lasted 40-60 minutes.

Results

The five research questions designed to generate needed information were: a) What are the challenges to employee retention in other non-fire organizations who utilize PT personnel? b) What are the experiences of other departments with a similar profile to UFD in regards to employee retention? c) What impacts do the demographics of Urbandale have on the retention of PT and POC employees? d) What reasons do current PT and POC employees have for being on the Urbandale Fire Department? e) What reasons do PT and POC employees give for leaving UFD? Information gained through the Descriptive Method of research, combined with the questionnaires and interviews, provided substantial data and insight for each of the questions posed.

On the challenges to employee retention in other non-fire organizations the interviews conducted showed some commonalities amongst the businesses. All three businesses are having difficulty retaining PT employees. The smallest of the three businesses, Homemakers Furniture, currently employs 49 PT employees. The largest employer interviewed, Mercy Hospital, currently employs 1,159 PT employees. Despite the large variance in employee numbers, each organization has found that PT employees often leave due to FT positions that become available, or because potential FT positions do not become available. All three agreed that the economy would drive future retention challenges. The expectations of the younger generations will also be a factor. The three HR managers interviewed felt that the work ethic of employees is changing, especially within the PT ranks. A general sense of entitlement among younger employees creates challenges for employers who are trying to have a customer service driven organization.

Regarding the retention experiences of other fire departments with a similar profile to UFD, the questionnaires provided some valuable insight. Seventy-five percent of the departments currently have issues retaining PT and POC employees. The same percentage doesn't have sufficient personnel to meet the demands for service. All departments have an average employee retention of eight years or less. Seventy-five percent of the departments currently have mentoring and/or employee development programs for PT and POC employees. Despite these programs, 88% of the departments anticipate retention problems over the next five years. Sixty-three percent of the departments plan to add in-station staffing within the next six years. Twenty-five percent feel that eventually only FT employees will staff their department.

The reasons for leaving the department and impacts for future retention were summarized using the four most common responses. The top four reasons for employees leaving the department were training expectations, family issues, other, and personal issues. For the "other" category, common responses included the failure to complete the necessary minimum requirements and leaving the department for a FT firefighter position at another department. On the issue of future retention impacts, the top four are training requirements, lack of citizen interest, pace of call volume, and other. For the "other" category, departments felt that FT employees handling a majority of the calls will have an impact on the morale and motivation of PT and POC employees.

All of the departments have created initiatives to help retain PT and POC employees. Increased pay and the establishment of duty/response crews were the top initiatives. Departments also noted longevity benefits, education incentives, social events, and in-station staffing as ways to help bolster retention. Despite the initiatives, 88% of the departments feel

elected officials and residents do not understand what it takes to become a PT or POC member of their department.

On the issue of Urbandale's demographics, data from the U.S. Census Bureau provides interesting data when comparing Urbandale to the other cities that received questionnaires. Based on 2009 population estimates, the smallest city has 9,036 residents (Norwalk, IA) and the largest city has 56,503 residents (West Des Moines, IA). The City of Urbandale has the third largest population among the cities. U.S. Census Bureau data also shows that Urbandale has the highest median household income (\$93,835) and highest median age (37.2 years) of all the cities. Urbandale has the third highest number of housing units (15,722).

Results from the three questionnaires used for the research show that a lack of community interest and understanding of what it takes to be a PT or POC employee may be a demographic factor to employee retention. However, there is no clear indicator that population, median household income, median age, or number of housing units have a direct causal link to the retention of PT and POC employees. Only three current and former UFD employees feel the demographics of Urbandale have contributed to the high employee turnover.

Regarding the questionnaire given to current PT and POC employees, 13 employees returned the questionnaire. Nine of the employees are POC and four are PT. Fifty-four percent of the employees have been employed at UFD for ten years or less. The top two reasons employees remain at UFD are professional issues and monetary needs. The third reason is evenly split on personal issues, changes within UFD, and the possibility of FT employment. Sixty-nine percent of the employees feel being a UFD employee seriously interferes with family or other job obligations. Seventy-seven percent of the employees feel elected officials and residents in Urbandale do not understand what it takes to be a PT or POC employee at UFD.

When asked about current turnover, 69% of employees feel UFD has a high turnover of PT and POC employees. The same percentage also feels that it is more difficult to retain PT and POC employees today than when they first joined the department. The top two reasons are training requirements and UFD personnel. The third reason is evenly split on UFD rules and regulations, less pay/benefits than other jobs, and “other.” Family vs. UFD and lack of adequate POC staff to respond to calls were comments noted in the “other” category.

Ninety-two percent of the employees have tried to recruit someone to come work at UFD as a PT or POC employee. The top reason they give for someone joining UFD is the reputation of UFD and a sense of serving the community. The second and third reasons are pay/benefits and future employment possibilities. The fourth reason is split between training opportunities and number of calls. Fifteen percent of employees feel UFD does an adequate job of trying to retain PT and POC employees, but only 23% are willing to lead or initiate an employee retention program.

Current PT and POC employees feel the best way to help better retain employees would be through increased pay/benefits. More input on decisions is second, and less training requirements along with mentoring/employee development programs share the third highest recommendation. More employee recognition rounded out the top four. Even with the recommendations, 46% feel retention will get worse at UFD. Sixty-nine percent of employees feel only FT employees will staff UFD within the next ten years. Thirty-eight percent of the employees plan on remaining at UFD for ten years or less, while the remainder plan on staying at UFD as long as they can.

The last research question involved the feelings of former PT and POC employees at UFD. Five former POC employees returned the questionnaire along with nine PT employees.

All were employed for less than five years. The main factor that influenced them to leave UFD was professional issues, followed by changes within UFD, personal issues, and family issues. Seventy-nine percent of the employees felt being a UFD employee seriously interfered with family or other job obligations. Eighty-six percent of the employees felt elected officials and residents in Urbandale did not understand what it takes to be a PT or POC employee at UFD.

When asked about turnover, 86% of employees felt UFD had a high turnover of PT and POC employees during their employment. The main contributor they felt was the training requirements. UFD personnel, rules and regulations, and less pay/benefits than other jobs were the other top perceived contributors to turnover. Eighty-six percent of employees tried to recruit someone to come work at UFD. The top reason they gave perspective employees was the training opportunities. The reputation of UFD, sense of serving the community, and department leadership were the other top reasons.

Former PT and POC employees feel that the best way to better retain employees is better pay/benefits. Less training requirements is second, followed by “other” and more input on decisions. For the “other” category, comments focused on more flexibility with training and FT vs. PT/POC relations. Sixty-nine percent of the employees have considered returning to UFD as a PT or POC employee.

Discussion

This author made an assumption that the questionnaires given to current and former UFD employees would yield similar results. Training requirements, pay/benefits, UFD personnel, and employee recognition were common themes related to the perceived retention problems at UFD. These themes reflected the current literature available on the issue. Gentry, Kuhnert, Mondore, and Page (2006) noted that one must consider retention at more than just a single level of

analysis because the influences of retention can occur at multiple levels. The results from the questionnaires help support this. The initial training requirements for employees are dictated by national and state guidelines. Pay/benefits and UFD personnel are influenced at the local level through the fire department and city council. Employee recognition is often influenced by our customer's reaction to the level of service they have received. On-going training requirements are dictated by local, state and national guidelines.

The retention experiences of UFD and other fire departments in the Des Moines area could be seen as typical for organizational commitment. A majority of the current and former UFD employees who completed questionnaires had five years or less on the department. Several of the other combination fire departments utilized in this research had employee retention average of eight years or less. Taylor and Stern (2009) found if you keep them for three to five years, you are making a very good return on your recruiting investment. Some may argue that this has been the trend in most of the business world due to the number of college graduates. But as UFD and other combination fire departments have found recruiting is becoming more and more difficult. Spending thousands of dollars to train someone, purchasing the appropriate personal protective equipment, and investing the time and money to continue to train them is no easy task. Is it plausible in the fire service to think a three to five year commitment is a return on investment?

When a new employee is hired, do we feel they will only commit to the organization for three to five years? UFD is not looking for a short-term commitment. Looking at the questionnaire from current UFD employees, 62% stated they plan on staying at UFD for as long as they can. Achieving this desire is dependent on organizations understanding retention is a two-way street. Hiring for retention must include two-way learning, where you assess job-

related information about each applicant and each applicant learns job related information about you (Finnegan, 2010). The goal is to hire quality, long-term employees. But, if there are not clear expectations on both sides, this could lead to the voluntary departure of employees.

Replacing employees is a time consuming and expensive process. For combination fire departments like UFD, the loss of an employee has significant impacts on day-to-day operations.

Without any formal exit interview process it is difficult to get a broad look of employee perspectives on retention. Branham (2005) noted that organizations can no longer just accept employees' superficial reasons about why they quit, even though in some cases "better pay" or "better opportunity" may be the real reason. Looking at the questionnaires, current and former UFD employees noted that better pay/benefits would help with retention. Seventy-five percent of the other combination fire departments have used increased pay/benefits as a way to help deal with retention. So why don't former employees say this when they leave UFD? Is it an issue of trying not to burn any bridges when leaving the department? Considering that 69% of former employees have considered returning to the department, this could be a logical conclusion.

Improved employee recognition was another item identified by current and former UFD employees as a way to improve retention. Receiving recognition for achievements is one of the most fundamental human needs. Fire service employees are often more used to hearing about things they did wrong, rather than something they did right that had a positive impact on the organization. Burke and Cooper (2008) found that receiving recognition is not childish and rather than making employees complacent, it reinforces their accomplishments, helping ensure there will be more of them. Formal and informal rewards have been done at UFD for several years. UFD has strived to provide employees with the recognition they deserve, especially under the circumstances they often have to deal with. But how do you measure the effectiveness of the

recognition you provide to employees? While not the focus of this ARP, measuring employee recognition may be something that could be evaluated using a formal exit interview program.

The questionnaires provided to current and former UFD employees showed that UFD personnel are a contributing factor to retention problems. Some comments from the questionnaires indicate there are occasional conflicts between the relations of FT and PT/POC employees. While it appears attitude is the primary issue, there is difficulty in determining the true meaning and intent of such comments. Weak leaders who do nothing to bring conflicts to a just and proper conclusion that eliminates the problem can create really bad situations (Carter, 2009). Does high employee turnover have more of an impact on existing employees? In the case of UFD, fewer employees mean more expectations on the existing employees to fill the void left by departing employees.

With the amount of time involved with recruiting new employees, are we ignoring the existing employees at UFD? Federman (2009) found that many organizations focus on new people or “early career” employees, forgetting about employees who have been with the organization for a while. In this way organizations can lose great employees through neglect.

One of the top ways to help employee retention identified by current UFD employees is through more input on department decisions. While this has been a consistent goal at UFD, could this be a sign that employees feel neglected? With the turnover and continuous recruiting efforts to fill open employee vacancies, are existing employees being put on the back burner?

Current and former UFD employees, along with other combination fire departments, provided similar perceptions on the issue of employee retention. Were these perceptions based off one event (e.g. - a disagreement with a supervisor) or a cumulative series of events? This can be difficult to obtain with the use of questionnaires or formal exit interview formats. Could

someone receiving a disciplinary action for not completing the required UFD training requirements be enough of a “shock” to cause them to leave? If someone is not able to be a part of committees because the meeting times are during hours where they are at their other job, does it cause them to eventually “give up” on contributing to the organization? Holtom, Mitchell, Lee, and Inderrieden (2005) found that different types of shocks occur with varying frequency, and that they differently affect the specific decision path followed by the employee along with his/her eventual decision to stay or leave.

This author found the results of the questionnaires and research enlightening and challenging. UFD has strived to retain quality employees. As our department and community have changed, so has the way we retain employees. The questionnaires to current and former employees confirmed that we are doing some things right, such as establishing a good reputation in the area and providing training opportunities for our employees. But, employees feel that these same training opportunities are also causing our retention problems. UFD leadership feels it has allowed its employees more voice and flexibility with department decisions compared to other combination fire departments. But, once again, employees feel this is an area for improvement.

The research and experiences of the authors in the literature review point out the true dynamics associated with employee retention. Like UFD the reasons people leave an organization appear simple but they are really complex when you try to get to the root of the issue. More pay, less training requirements, and more employee recognition all seem like attainable things for increased employee retention. But, how do you convince a city council that PT and POC employees should have higher pay when the city has to hire additional FT staff because of increasing issues with recruitment and retention of these employees? In a time of

economic downturn, many taxpayers are not supportive of initiatives such as this. The fact that it is for fire department employees has little bearing on whether it will have increased support by taxpayers.

Other area fire departments are having similar issues with employee retention. Their experiences with employee retention are similar to UFD. Some departments are having success with initiatives such as education benefits and employee development programs for PT and POC employees. A majority of the departments indicated that they expect to have retention problems well into the future. As suburban areas continue to grow it will be interesting to see how their employee retention rates compare to UFD.

This research also disproved a couple pre-conceived notions I had about the retention problems at UFD. Informally, many employees that leave UFD cite time commitment as the reason they can no longer be with our organization. Based on UFD's increasing call volume and community demographics, I too felt this was a primary contributing factor to why people leave our organization. But, time commitment was not a primary factor given by current and former UFD employees as to why there is high turnover at UFD.

The second pre-conceived notion involves employee recognition and input on decisions. UFD takes pride in the way it recognizes employees. The department has tried to be innovative in the way it recognizes employees and allowing them to provide input on training, operational, and educational initiatives for the department. All UFD employees have the opportunity to comment on Standard Operating Guidelines (SOGs) before they are implemented. For several years, there was a comment box in the station where employees could leave any thoughts, ideas, or concerns anonymously for UFD administration to review. A monthly newsletter is published and sent to all UFD employees that details upcoming events and opportunities for employees, as

well as any recognition that UFD employees have recently been awarded. With the opportunities that currently exist for employee recognition and input on decisions, it is troubling that current and former UFD employees have these in the top four reasons for ways to improve employee retention.

It is obvious from the research that the organizational implications of training requirements, pay/benefits, and employee recognition will present immediate and long-term problems. Although attempts have been made to streamline training and provide ample opportunities for PT and POC employees to complete necessary training, other alternatives or modifications may need to be evaluated. Some alternatives or modifications may not be plausible due to various local, state, and national certification requirements for fire/EMS personnel. Although pay/benefits was not a top reason employees left UFD, it may require further evaluation as neighboring communities continue to utilize PT and POC employees as a primary component of fire department staffing. This could potentially create competition for PT employees. There is potential to have a similar issue with employee recognition. If employees feel they are not receiving the recognition they deserve, they may go to another department where they feel they will be recognized appropriately. There may be other alternatives related to employee recognition, but these have not been identified or studied to see what financial impact would be incurred.

Recommendations

The Urbandale Fire Department has experienced an increased turnover of PT and POC employees. Questionnaires completed by current and former employees provided valuable insight to the perceived reasons of the turnover problem, and employee recommendations to try and deal with the issue. The results of the questionnaires, combined with the literature reviewed

for this ARP, provide the basis for three recommendations to help address the employee retention issues at UFD.

A formal exit interview process should be developed for PT and POC employees. The process should include a standard set of questions for the employee at the time of resignation followed by a set of questions within six months of resignation. Based on the results of the questionnaires used for this ARP, it is obvious that UFD is not hearing the same things during informal interviews that take place when employees resign. A formal exit interview process may also allow employees to feel more comfortable in sharing information about why they felt compelled to leave the organization. This information could be a valuable tool to help facilitate changes within UFD to help better retain employees. Being able to obtain this information on a more frequent basis will also allow UFD to compare the experiences of other combination fire departments that are having employee retention issues. The overall cost of this process would be minimal to UFD. Postage fees and personnel time would be the primary costs associated with this recommendation.

The establishment of an employee development program could help address the perceived reasons for employee turnover at UFD. Current and former employees identified that training requirements, rules and regulations, and UFD personnel are all contributing factors to the increased employee turnover. An employee development program could facilitate the establishment of incentives or alternatives to address these issues, while ensuring the mission and vision of the department are maintained. While only 23% of current employees said they would be willing to lead or initiate an employee development program, an opportunity such as this would be an excellent way for employees to have more input on department decisions. For optimal success, PT and POC employees should initiate the employee development program.

The program will take some time to get established. Program goals will need to be established and any initiatives the group develops shall need to be reviewed by fire department administration if a budget is needed. All of this is dependent upon participation by PT and POC employees.

An evaluation of the current pay/benefit structure for PT and POC employees should be completed. The last pay increases for employees were done in August of 2009. As more fire departments in the Des Moines area continue to rely on PT and POC employees, increased competition for employees becomes a distinct possibility. Assuring that employee pay remains competitive will be crucial for retaining current employees, let alone any future ones. A key component of this pay evaluation involves analyzing the return on investment from the last pay raise. Did UFD see an increase in employee turnout to fires and other calls for service as a result of the last pay increase? In a time of economic downturn, this is the type of question that elected officials and taxpayers will ask. The largest costs associated with this evaluation will involve personnel time to evaluate employee call statistics along with the pay structures of other neighboring fire departments.

Future readers who may wish to replicate any portion of this research should establish a comprehensive list of perceived causes of employee turnover prior to establishing questionnaires or surveys for target groups. This list can be beneficial in developing the questionnaires and surveys, as well as contrasting the perceived causes developed by the author to those of the target groups. Prior to developing recommendations, readers should thoroughly evaluate all programs and initiatives already in place related to employee retention. Initiating a change to an existing program or initiative must include what, if any, impact has already occurred.

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Appendix A

3/17/10

Fire Chief Rex Mundt
Ankeny Fire Department
120 NW Ash Dr.
Ankeny, IA 50021

Dear Chief Mundt,

I have started the Executive Fire Officer (EFO) Program at the National Fire Academy (NFA). The topic I have chosen for my first applied research project is on the retention of part time (PT) and paid-on-call (POC) employees at the Urbandale Fire Department. We have experienced a significant turnover of PT and POC employees over the past 18 months. For my research, I am reaching out to combination fire departments such as yours to gather data on your experiences with retaining PT and POC employees.

The end goal of my research is to identify ways UFD can better retain PT and POC employees. The data I receive from departments like yours will be a valuable tool for me to conduct meaningful research on this topic. In order for me to complete my applied research project in a timely manner I ask that you, or your designee, **please complete the attached questionnaire by Friday, April 9, 2010.** Where questions allow, please add any input that you feel is appropriate. Use the pre-paid envelope that has been provided to mail the questionnaire back.

If you have any questions about my applied research project or the attached questionnaire, please let me know. I greatly appreciate your time and consideration to my request.

Sincerely,

Jon Rech
Fire Marshal

Employee Retention Questionnaire for Combination Fire Departments

1. What is your department staffing based on the following employee classifications?

of Full Time (FT) _____

of Part Time (PT) _____

of Paid-on-Call (POC) _____

of Volunteer (no pay) _____

2. Does your department currently have issues with retaining PT and POC employees?

_____ Yes

_____ No

3. Does your department have sufficient PT and POC employees to meet the demands for service on a consistent basis?

_____ Yes

_____ No

4. If not, what times are problematic (check all that apply)?

_____ Daytime weekday

_____ Holidays

_____ Evening weekday

_____ Public education events

_____ Daytime weekend

_____ Training

_____ Evening weekend

_____ Adverse weather

_____ Other: _____

_____ Not Applicable

5. Do you have a formal mentoring/employee development program for PT and POC staff that join your department?

_____ Yes

_____ No

6. What is the average retention for PT and POC employees at your department who were hired in the year 2000 or after?

_____ Less than 1 year

_____ 1-3 years

_____ 4-8 years

_____ More than 8 years

7. What reasons do PT and POC employees give for leaving your department (check all that apply)?

_____ Personal issues

_____ Family issues

_____ Professional issues

_____ Monetary needs

_____ # of calls for service

_____ Changes in the department

_____ Training expectations

_____ Loss of interest

_____ Other: _____

8. What do you feel will impact future retention of PT and POC employees on your department (check all that apply)?

_____ pace of call volume

_____ Training requirements

_____ lack of citizen interest

_____ Lack of equipment/facilities

_____ economics in the community _____ Pay/stipends

_____ Other: _____

9. Do you feel that elected officials and residents in your community understand what it takes to become a PT or POC member of your department?

_____ Yes

_____ No

10. Do you have plans to add in-station staffing?

_____ Yes

_____ No

11. If yes, when will this likely occur?

_____ Less than 1 year

_____ 1-3 years

_____ 4-6 years

_____ More than 7 years

_____ Unknown

12. What initiatives has your department done to help retain PT and POC employees (check all that apply)?

_____ Increased pay/compensation

_____ Longevity benefits

_____ Education incentives

_____ Establish duty/response crews

_____ Other: _____

13. Is there a time during the year when you seem to get more applications from prospective PT and POC employees?

_____ Yes

_____ No

Appendix B

3/18/10

Dear Mark,

I have started the Executive Fire Officer Program (EFOP) at the National Fire Academy. The purpose of the EFOP is to help develop leadership of fire officers to help them better their respective department. The topic I have chosen for my first applied research project involves the retention of PT & POC employees at UFD. Specifically, I am looking at the increase in employee turnover over the past 18 months. As a current member of UFD your input on this matter is extremely important. The attached questionnaire asks a variety of questions related to employee retention at UFD.

I ask that you please answer the questions honestly and where questions allow, please add input that you feel is appropriate. The end goal of my research is to identify ways we can help retain PT and POC employees. I don't need, nor want your name on the questionnaire. I just need your honest feedback so I can conduct meaningful research on this issue.

In order to complete my applied research project in a timely manner, **I ask that you please complete the attached questionnaire by Friday, April 9, 2010. Place your completed questionnaire in the reports box at Station #41 or Station #42.** I will be checking the boxes daily Monday-Friday.

If you have any additional questions about my applied research project or the attached questionnaire, please let me know.

Thank you!

Jon Rech, Fire Marshal

UFD Employee Retention Questionnaire

1. What is your current employment status at UFD?

_____ POC

_____ PT

2. How long have you been employed at UFD?

_____ less than 2 years

_____ 2-5 years

_____ 6-10 years

_____ more than 10 years

3. Aside from UFD, are you employed at another job that is not Fire/EMS related?

_____ Yes

_____ No

4. Aside from UFD, are you employed at another Fire/EMS Agency?

_____ Yes

_____ No

5. Are the reasons you remain at UFD the same reasons why you joined the department?

_____ Yes

_____ No

6. If not, what factors have influenced your current reasons for remaining at UFD (check all that apply)?

_____ Personal issues

_____ Changes in the community

- Professional issues Family issues
- Changes within UFD Monetary needs
- Other: _____
- Not applicable

7. How often do you find being a member of UFD seriously interferes with your family or other job obligations?

- Never
- Seldom
- Sometimes
- Often

8. Do you feel that elected officials and residents in Urbandale understand what it takes to be a PT or POC employee of UFD?

- Yes
- No
- Unsure

9. Do you feel UFD has a high turnover of PT & POC employees?

- Yes
- No
- Unsure

10. If yes, what do you feel contributes to this (check all that apply)?

- UFD rules & regulations Training requirements
- Number of calls for service Lack of community spirit

- Lack of social functions
- UFD personnel
- Less pay/benefits than other jobs
- Demographics of Urbandale
- Other: _____
- Not applicable

11. Do you feel it is more difficult to retain PT & POC employees at UFD today than when you first started on the department?

- Yes
- No
- Unsure

12. Have you ever tried to recruit someone to come work at UFD as a PT or POC employee?

- Yes
- No

13. If yes, what reasons did you give he/she as to why they should join (check all that apply)?

- Number of calls
- Reputation of UFD
- Sense of serving the community
- Pay/benefits
- Promotion & future employment possibilities
- Training opportunities
- Other: _____
- Not applicable

14. Do you feel UFD does an adequate job of trying to retain PT & POC employees?

_____ Yes

_____ No

_____ Unsure

15. If no or unsure, what do you think would help better retain PT & POC employees (check all that apply)?

_____ More training opportunities

_____ More social functions

_____ Less training requirements

_____ Better pay/benefits

_____ Mentoring/employee development programs

_____ Better equipment/vehicles

_____ More input on decisions

_____ More employee recognition

_____ Not applicable

_____ Other: _____

16. Would you be willing to lead or initiate an employee retention program for UFD?

_____ Yes

_____ No

_____ Unsure

17. Over the next few years, what do you think will happen in regards to retaining PT & POC employees?

_____ It will get better

_____ It will get worse

_____ Unsure

_____ There will be no change

18. Do you feel there will come a time when UFD will be staffed only by full-time employees?

_____ Yes

_____ No

_____ Unsure

19. If yes, when do you feel this may occur?

_____ Less than 5 years

_____ 5-10 years

_____ Greater than 10 years

_____ Unsure

_____ Not applicable

20. How long do you plan on remaining a PT or POC employee at UFD?

_____ Less than 5 years

_____ 5-10 years

_____ Greater than 10 years

_____ As long as I possibly can

Thank you for your time and honesty!

Appendix C

3/18/10

Dear Rob,

I have started the Executive Fire Officer Program (EFOP) at the National Fire Academy. The purpose of the EFOP is to help develop leadership of fire officers to help them better their respective department. Applied research projects are required each of the 4 years of the program. The topic I have chosen for my first applied research project involves the retention of PT & POC employees at UFD. Specifically, I am looking at the increase in employee turnover over the past 18 months. As a past member within this time period your input on this matter is extremely important. The attached questionnaire asks a variety of questions related to the issue of employee retention at UFD.

I ask that you please answer the questions honestly and where questions allow, please add input you feel is appropriate. The end goal of my research is to identify ways we can help better retain PT & POC employees. I don't need, nor want your name on the questionnaire. I just need your honest feedback so I can conduct meaningful research on this issue.

In order to complete my applied research project in a timely manner, **I ask that you please complete the attached questionnaire by Friday, April 9, 2010. Please place your completed questionnaire in the pre-paid envelope and mail it back to me.**

If you have any questions about my applied research project or the attached questionnaire, please let me know.

Thank you!

Jon Rech, Fire Marshal

UFD Former Employee Questionnaire

1. What was your employee classification at UFD?

_____ POC

_____ PT

2. How long were you employed at UFD?

_____ Less than 2 years

_____ 2-5 years

_____ 6-10 years

_____ More than 10 years

3. While employed at UFD, did you also have another job that was not Fire/EMS related?

_____ Yes

_____ No

4. While employed at UFD, did you also have a job at another Fire/EMS Agency?

_____ Yes

_____ No

5. What factors influenced you to leave UFD (check all that apply)?

_____ Personal issues

_____ Changes in the community

_____ Professional issues

_____ Family issues

_____ Changes within UFD

_____ Monetary needs

_____ Employment was terminated

_____ Other: _____

6. How often did you find being a member of UFD seriously interfered with your family or other job obligations?

- _____ Never
- _____ Seldom
- _____ Sometimes
- _____ Often

7. Did you feel that elected officials and residents in Urbandale understood what it took to be a PT or POC employee of UFD?

- _____ Yes
- _____ No
- _____ Unsure

8. While employed at UFD, did you feel UFD had a high turnover of PT & POC employees?

- _____ Yes
- _____ No
- _____ Unsure

9. If yes, what did you feel contributed to this (check all that apply)?

- _____ UFD rules & regulations
- _____ Training requirements
- _____ Number of calls for service
- _____ Lack of community spirit
- _____ Lack of social functions
- _____ UFD personnel
- _____ Less pay/benefits than other jobs
- _____ Demographics of Urbandale
- _____ Other: _____

_____ Not applicable

While employed at UFD, did you ever try to recruit someone to come work at UFD as a PT or POC employee?

_____ Yes

_____ No

10. If yes, what reasons did you give he/she as to why they should join (check all that apply)?

_____ Number of calls

_____ Reputation of UFD

_____ Sense of serving the community

_____ Pay/benefits

_____ Promotion & future employment possibilities

_____ Training opportunities

_____ Other: _____

_____ Not applicable

11. While employed at UFD, did you feel UFD did an adequate job of trying to retain PT & POC employees?

_____ Yes

_____ No

_____ Unsure

12. If no or unsure, what do you think would help better retain PT & POC employees (check all that apply)?

_____ More training opportunities

_____ More social functions

_____ Less training requirements

_____ Better pay/benefits

- _____ Mentoring/employee development programs
- _____ Better equipment/vehicles _____ More input on decisions
- _____ More employee recognition _____ Not applicable
- _____ Other: _____

13. Since leaving, have you kept in contact with any current PT or POC employees of UFD?

- _____ Yes
- _____ No

14. Since leaving, have you considered returning to UFD as a PT or POC employee?

- _____ Yes
- _____ No

15. If no, what have been the reasons (check all that apply)?

- _____ Not interested anymore _____ Reputation of UFD
- _____ Personal issues _____ # of calls UFD handles
- _____ Professional issues _____ UFD rules & regulations
- _____ Current pay/benefits at UFD _____ Family issues
- _____ Other: _____

Thank you for your time and honesty!

Appendix D

Business Interview Questions

1. How many FT employees do you have? How many PT?
2. Approximately how many PT employees live in Urbandale?
3. Does your organization have issues with retaining PT employees?
4. What is the average retention for PT employees in your organization?
5. Does your organization have sufficient PT staff to meet demands for service on a consistent basis?
6. Do you have a mentoring/employee development program for PT employees?
7. What reasons do PT staff give for leaving your organization?
8. What challenges does your organization have with retaining PT employees?
9. Is your organization's experience with employee retention typical for this type of business?
10. What do you see as the biggest employee retention challenge in the future? Is this because of the type of work here, or just because of today's society?
11. What incentives/initiatives has your organization done to help retain employees?
12. Is there a time of year when you seem to get more applications from prospective PT employees?
13. Do you feel your organization will have problems retaining employees in the next 5 years?