

**SUCCESSION PLANNING FOR SUCCESS: DEVELOPING SUPPORT FOR
CHIEF OFFICER PROMOTIONS UTILIZING INTERNAL POOLS OF
CANDIDATES.**

EXECUTIVE LEADERSHIP

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ABSTRACT

Whether it is called executive resource development, leadership development planning, or succession management planning, the intended result is all the same; To guarantee that organizations have the most qualified people ready to fill key leadership positions, continuing to move the organization forward (Walker, 1998). Monterey Park Fire Department was not an organization like the one described above. A practice of hiring chief officers from external pools of candidates had contributed to poor morale.

The problem this research project addressed was the low moral and sluggish acceptance of change within the Department with a probable link drawn from practices of hiring chief officers from outside the organization.

The purpose of this applied research was to evaluate the merits of effective succession planning to improve internal candidates competitiveness for advancement to chief officer positions, thereby improving moral and acceptance of change.

Utilizing evaluative research methodologies, the following research questions were asked:

- 1) How could intellectual capacity and leadership be built or improved to create a pool of competitive candidates worthy of advancement?
- 2) How have other organizations influenced decision-makers to promote qualified individuals from internal candidate pools?
- 3) In what ways does support exist within the Monterey Park Fire to institute a succession plan?

The procedures used for this research included literature review, personal interviews and questionnaires. The results indicated the department was lacking a formal

succession planning process, whereby intellectual capacity and leadership could be improved, influence could be developed with external decision-makers and internal support could be honed.

Recommendations included assistance from professional consultant(s) familiar with the succession planning process as well as identifying key positions within the organization to begin the process. Following the roll-out, the entire department would be included to develop a culture of growth and learning. Semi-annual evaluation of the succession plan would determine effectiveness.

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INTRODUCTION

Whether it is called executive resource development, leadership development planning, or succession management planning, the intended result is all the same; to guarantee that organizations have the most qualified people ready to fill key leadership positions that continue to move the organization forward (Walker, 1998). In fact, according to the International Association of Fire Chief (IAFC) Officer Development Handbook, (2003) “the need for professional development, especially for fire service officers, is not a new issue...as early as 1966, the issue drew international attention as a key component of the report from the first Wingspread Conference-Statements of National Significance to the Fire Service Problem in the United States” (p. 2). Today, according to Wall and Wall (1995), “...especially in businesses that rely on the provision of professional services, the only way to gain a competitive advantage is to have superior people – to be the employer of choice” (p. 27). Typically, according to Charan, Drotter and Noel (2001), “companies bring in an outsider who doesn’t know the company well or they turn to an insider who isn’t ready to take on the company’s top position” (p. 165). The goal of any organization, especially service-oriented organizations, must now rely on the practice of developing key organizational people through a process that identifies candidates and tracks their progress and development in order to assure the link between organizational development and organizational goals (Nardoni, 1997).

The problem this research project addresses is the issue of low moral and sluggish acceptance of change within the Monterey Park Fire Department. A probable link to these troubles can be drawn to the past practice of hiring chief officers from outside the organization. A recent management team-building session, which utilized a strength,

weakness, opportunity, and threat (SWOT) analysis highlighted this issue by listing this correlation of hiring from the outside as a threat. One of the findings of the SWOT, which was developed from extensive interviews with the fire chief, four battalion chiefs and 12 captains, suggests that high turnover of the fire chief position, coupled with external hiring practices, leads to lack of continuity in leadership, loss of credibility within the department and threatens long-term effectiveness of the organization (Monterey Park Fire Department Strategic Planning Leadership Workshop, 2005).

The purpose of this applied research is to evaluate the merits of effective succession planning as a means to improve internal candidates competitiveness for advancement to chief officer positions, thereby improving moral and acceptance of change within the organization. The true hope is that by highlighting these issues and the opportunities for improvement, attention will be established for the good of the organization. After all, according to DeLuca (1992), “When it comes to organizational change, the scariest and most critical of all organizational resources is executive attention” (p. 152). This study utilized evaluative research methodologies to answer the following research questions as they relate to the Monterey Park Fire Department:

- 1) How could intellectual capacity and leadership be built or improved to create a pool of competitive candidates worthy of advancement?
- 4) How have other organizations influenced decision-makers to promote qualified individuals from internal candidate pools?
- 5) In what ways does support exist within the Monterey Park Fire Department to institute a succession plan?

These three research questions play an important role in identifying the culture and employee morale within the Monterey Park Fire Department that will be addressed in the following background and significance section.

BACKGROUND AND SIGNIFICANCE

The Monterey Park Fire Department is located six miles east of downtown Los Angeles, California, and employs 62 full-time, paid members that serve approximately 61,000 residents. The Department provides a multitude of services to the community, including fire suppression, emergency medical services, fire prevention, hazardous material response, public education and arson investigation. In addition, the department is the lead agency for all city-wide disaster preparedness activities and the standardized emergency management system (SEMS). Operating from three fire stations, the department responded to 3,654 calls for service while completing 22,500 hours of in-service training. The Department has maintained services with an operating budget of \$7,581,200 while attempting to sustain an adequate experience level within the ranks (*Monterey Park Fire Department Annual Report, 2004*).

An executive team, comprised of five chief officers, supports the Monterey Park Fire Department. In the past five years of promotions to chief officer positions, the fire chief and one battalion chief were lateral transfers. Moreover, only two of the previous five promotions to the chief officer rank were from internal pools of candidates (Andrea Cutler, Personnel Analysis, Monterey Park Human Resources Department, personal communication, March 1, 2005). This lack of depth in the organization was becoming a true problem and creating dissatisfaction with all members eager for an opportunity to promote. One of the major issues facing the organization was the question of how to reverse the practice of hiring lateral chief officers and begin the process of developing

incumbent members interested in advancement. The end goal was to develop an organization much like what Tichy (2002) describes, “The companies with the most leaders are the most successful. And companies get leaders by consciously creating virtuous teaching cycles that constantly improve the abilities of people at all levels of the organization” (p. 152). Because as Tulgan (2001) suggests, “successful organizations in the new economy will have strong and very lean core groups, while they get more and more of the work done by tapping large, robust pools of fluid talent” (p. 77).

Following attendance at the National Fire Academy’s *Executive Leadership* course in November 2004, the researcher approached the Monterey Park Fire Chief with the idea of contracting with a private management consultant to perform team-building and leadership training. Agreement from the fire chief was reached and a few of the outcomes from the team-building session are discussed.

Of importance, the team-building seminar produced unanimous approval that the department should develop consistent and strong leadership within its membership, including identifying the organization’s mission, vision and values. Developing selection criteria and characteristics for the position of fire chief, battalion chief and captain in the form of a succession plan was also addressed (Monterey Park Fire Department Strategic Planning Leadership Workshop, 2005). A desired outcome of the team-building process would conform to what Kim (2003) contends:

“...the key step to successfully integrating succession planning and career development in public organizations are establishing core competencies, encouraging self-determination, developing career planning, using technology for career development, recommending a strong career development program, taking

a comprehensive and organization-wide view of career development, focusing on people, finding a champion and promoting realistic expectations” (p. 535). If follow-through was to occur in this process, then the department would be taking its first step towards true succession planning which has been identified as “...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, 2000 *Executive Leadership* Student Manual p. 6-3). The succession/replacement planning topic contained in Unit 6 of the National Fire Academy *Executive Leadership* course would justify the inherent good of performing this research that eventually could result in the development and integration of effective succession planning within all leadership levels of the Monterey Park Fire Department. Ultimately, however, the development and integration of an effective succession plan would do more than improve employee satisfaction and acceptance of change.

The functional goal of effective succession planning would be the improvement in core competencies, improved career development, and the heightened desire for improving skills and knowledge at all levels within the organization that would have a direct correlation to meeting one of the United States Fire Administration operations objectives to “reduce the loss of life from fire of firefighters” (National Fire Academy, 2003, *Executive Fire Officer Program Operational Policies and Procedures*, p. II-2). This operational objective played a critical role in reminding the researcher of the true benefit to any process that adds benefit to firefighter safety and maintained focus of the next section, literature review.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The literature review was conducted to recognize and evaluate the merits of effective succession planning, focusing on the role that the process could play in improving organizational morale and acceptance of change. Several important and related facets were studied in hopes of gaining a deeper understanding of the process, and more importantly, the positive consequences the process would have on all stakeholders. Ultimately the benefit of instituting such a process was shown to be overwhelming, beginning with the actions needed to create a pool of competitive candidates worthy of advancement.

Career Development

The importance of career development has been studied for decades. Magazine articles and books, teaching institutes and learning centers, on-the-job training and elaborate off-site schooling, for every conceivable occupation, has been developed to assure employees mature in a manner suitable for advancement. It's easy to examine the healthy organizations that successfully perform this task, but is it equally as easy to pick out those organizations that don't successfully perform the task? According to Ransom (2003):

“Possibly, no one previously emphasized the value of identifying and developing leaders from within. It's easy to see which organizations do not have such a strategy in play: 1) They're in a rut, often hiring people from outside who do not fit into the culture and style of the organization, 2) They have no internal development program and 3) their new hires often fail and are gone in a few years, replaced by yet more of the same” (p.59).

The key is to transition those organizations out of the rut and engage some positive career development.

The first step in instituting career development, thereby improving intellectual capacity and leadership ability, is to determine the current strengths and weaknesses of the employees. What is surprising to learn in this evaluative context, according to Micahels, Handfield-Jones and Axelrod (2001), is “only 16 percent of the managers we surveyed said their companies really know who the high and low performers are. How can companies promote and keep their most talented people if they don’t systematically identify who they are? How can below-average performers be helped or moved if they aren’t identified?” (p. 15). Yet another benefit begins to emerge from the career development process, that of identifying the high and low performers. Furthermore, Kim (2003) suggests that “the combined process of career development and succession planning give any organization – public or private – a snapshot of available talent for meeting current and future needs” (p. 534). After an organization has acknowledged the need for career development and has identified the high and low performers, the real work begins.

Systematic approaches must be employed to secure successful results when dealing with employee development. When assessing training needs, Patton & Pratt, (2002) state:

“The first step in the development of a management training program is the assessment of organizational and individual training needs assessments (TNA)...early work on needs assessments identified three levels of assessment; organizational analysis, operational analysis and individual analysis. TNA would

look at organizational needs to determine what managers need to know to most effectively support organizational goals” (p. 466).

Several techniques are available for conducting the training needs assessments, including observation, questionnaires, consultation with subject matter experts, review of relevant printed media, interviews, group discussions, tests, mentoring and work samples Patton and Pratt (2002). Once the training needs are established, the hard work of employee enhancement must begin.

Recognizing that a need for training and employee enhancement exists is important, but often times follow-through on that training is void. Truly an organizational goal must align with developing practices and processes that are effective and focused on the job. As explained by Coleman (2000), “Within the basic concept of career development, there’s a need to develop specific knowledge, skills and abilities, but they have to be appropriate for the task or activity. There’s a wide range of activities needed to be better prepared for moving up in an organization” (p. 118). Certainly if a wide spectrum of activities exist that add benefit to employees, in regards of career enhancement, career enrichment and career development, the next step in the process of preparing employees for upward mobility is to establish strategies for developing new skills.

In terms of developing new skills, it must become the culture of the organization that learning is vital, necessary, expected and on-going, at every level. Described by Rothwell and wellins (2004) “An informal method uses competencies as a foundation to prompt self-reflection and guide career conversation with your mentor or supervisor. A more formal method relies on such organized approaches as assessing individual

competencies as 360-degree assessments, assessment centers, and work sample” (p. 4).

However, Wall and Wall (1995), present another method;

“There are five major approaches for developing or improving your skills:

1. Reading
2. Self-monitoring: Establish a tracking system to determine if you are making progress towards your objectives.
3. Coaching/Consulting/Mentoring: Identify someone who is qualified and willing to provide instruction and guidance in the areas you want to improve.
4. Training: Attend a formal course, workshop, or seminar that includes training in the areas you want to improve.
5. Job Assignments: Find a way to enhance your current job (special projects, new challenges) or change assignments to provide yourself with developmental experiences” (p. 240).

The key is to establish a methodology that is exciting, challenging and rewarding to the participant. Charan, Drotter and Noel (2001) suggest action learning:

“In a nutshell, Action Learning involves setting up teams of leaders who are all on the same leadership level and assigning them a highly challenging task related to a significant business objective. These are stretch assignments that demand that participants develop new skills, time applications, and values in order to complete the assignment successfully. They are also broad assignments that encompass most if not all of the organizations performance dimensions” (p. 160).

Regardless of what method is used to obtain new skills, the process must endure.

Professional development must become the planned progressive life-long process of

education, training, self-development and experience – Professional development is a journey, not a destination (International Association of Fire Chief's Officer Development Handbook, 2003).

Influencing Decision-Makers

Certainly the benefits of any effective succession planning process are evident. Employee growth through training, education, mentoring and action learning and organizational improvement through a developed culture of growth and learning will occur, but equally important for the success of any such program is captured through reward of the employee. Organizations that have high expectations of their employees with little or no feedback and reward are creating a recipe for failure. Tichy (2002) explains "...the kind of ownership that really generates energy is not economic. It is emotional. It is the kind that gives people a sense of responsibility. It is the kind that makes them feel that their actions make a difference. It is the sense that they are valuable member of the team" (p. 89). One of the roles the executive leadership can play, to ensure that employees are being recognized for their efforts and will be rewarded appropriately, is to advocate on behalf of the workforce.

Developing behind the scenes support for the employees within an organization is a critical and important process that leaders must embrace. Typically this behind the scenes support is being developed and fostered with external decision-makers. Whether it is a City Manager, Mayor, Politician or the Board of Directors, this support for employees must begin with the leader earning credibility and trust. Kouzes and Posner (1993) explain "Being seen as someone who can be trusted, who has high integrity, and who is honest and truthful is essential...Credibility, like reputation, is something that is

earned over time. It does not come automatically with the job or the title” (p. 24). The continuous process of building and maintaining credibility and trust should then be followed by professional and effective persuasion.

Leaders, if they are to influence decisions-makers, must learn how to effectively persuade those individuals responsible for the overall direction of the organization. What is typical, however is critical decision-makers are detached from the day-to-day operations of the organization, not intimate with the hard work and efforts put forth by the workforce, and perhaps not so inclined to make decisions that are to the best interest of the workers. According to Conger (1998) “There are four distinct steps to becoming an effective persuader...1) building credibility 2) finding common ground 3) Developing compelling positions and evidence and 4) connecting emotionally” (p. 45). Along with the distinctive steps to becoming an effective persuader, certain tactics must be considered. Conger has developed a credibility tactic grid that considers the persuaders expertise reputation and relationship reputation is shown below in table 1.

Table 1
Credibility Tactic Grid

Strong	Investigate colleagues’ concerns about Issues beforehand.	Persuade directly using techniques of framing, compelling position/evidence, and emotional connection
	Network beforehand to ensure support.	
Your Expertise Reputation	Involve others who have stronger relationships To persuade your case.	Involve outside experts to validate Bring in external validated evidence (e.g. market research, consultants’ reports). Create pilots/prototypes/mini-successes That prove your position.
	Network beforehand to ensure support.	
Weak	Involve others who have stronger relationships And expertise to persuade on your behalf.	
	Involve outside experts and credible references That validate your position.	
	Seek early proofs/successes/prototypes of your Position beforehand as confirming evidence.	
Weak		Strong
		Your Relationship Reputation

Finally, as leaders advocate for their employees, the undeniable fact comes into to play – leaders must get political to enhance the success of their workforce. Often people perceive politics to be negative and equate politics to unsavory, back-room dealings that are less than ethical. DeLuca (1992) perceives it differently, stating political savvy is “the ability to manage multiple agendas simultaneously and ethically...the number one criteria for being politically savvy is understanding the agendas - both professional and personal - of the key players” (p. 112). Building support for the organization, creating attention to the practices and procedures of the organization and generating influence over the external policy-makers, hopefully to the benefit of the employees, is all part of the strategic process of involvement from those external decision-makers. In turn, this involvement from external decision-makers should inspire the employees to continue their hard efforts and cause internal support for new ventures the organization is interested in undertaking. And so the continuum process of momentum will begin (DeLuca 1992).

Building Support Within the Organization

In context of any new venture that an organization undertakes, one of the principal attributes in developing success is stakeholder participation. Getting buy-in from all members is critical because as Yukl (2002) has identified “motivated, competent followers are necessary for the successful performance of work carried out by the leaders unit” (p. 184). To become a truly effective organization which embraces change and approaches new endeavors with eagerness and interest, a culture of learning and a committed organization willing to change must be established. Organizations must

attempt to develop what Gebhardt and Townsend (1997) refer to as “exemplary followers, those who are both actively engaged with their leaders and their environment and who exhibit independent, critical thinking” (p. 49). Building support within the organization requires concerted effort on the part of leadership as well.

Leaders need to recognize the causes of resistance to change and become sensitive to these causes when applying influence within the organization to create change.

O’Tool (1995) lists a sampling of the speculations about the root cause of resistance to change:

- “1) Homeostasis (Continual change is not a natural condition of life).
- 2) Stare decisis (In common law, the presumption must always be given to the status quo).
- 3) Inertia (When a large body is in motion, it takes considerable force to alter its course).
- 4) Satisfaction (Most people are perfectly content with the status quo).
- 5) Lack of Ripeness (Change occurs only when certain preconditions have been met).
- 6) Fear (Humans have an innate fear of the unknown).
- 7) Self-Interest (Change may be good for others or even for the system as a whole, but unless it is specifically good for us, we will resist it).
- 8) Lack of self-confidence (Change threatens our self-esteem. New conditions require of us fresh skills, abilities and attitudes, but we lack confidence that we are up to the new challenge)” (p. 161).

Understanding and appreciating the causes of resistance to change will give the leaders a deeper understanding and provide valuable insight into the processes required to assure the organization evolves and flourishes.

One of the most important roles that the leader plays, in regards to developing a pro-change organization, is that of keeping the organization composed and integrated. Instilling values, maintaining control and assuring accountability are the pillars to organizational success. O'Toole (1995) contends that "leaders must then begin by setting aside that culturally conditioned 'natural' instinct to lead by push, particularly when times are tough. Leaders must instead adopt the unnatural behavior of always leading by the pull of inspiring values" (p. 11).

Summary

The literature review was essential to this study, in that it provided direction and focus to an otherwise broad and difficult topic. Additionally the literature review revealed the importance of succession planning in effective organization, working hand-in-hand with influencing and persuading decision-makers for the betterment of the workforce. Prior to the literature review there was uncertainty as to the effectiveness of succession planning and trepidation as to the benefit the process would provide to the Monterey Park Fire Department. Following extensive research, however, it is now determined that effective succession planning is vital to the endurance of the organization and the well-being of the men and women who have dedicated themselves to be professional firefighters. Boulmetis (2002), maintains "Forward thinking current leaders recognize that organizational results depend on members expertise, which can be enhanced by staff development and succession planning. This requires attention to

individual talents and aspirations, as well as organizational conditions and visions”
(p.35).

PROCEDURES

Literature Review

Research and data collection began with a literature review at the National Fire Academy’s Learning Resource Center in November 2004. Many article in fire service trade magazines, technical reports and previous Executive Fire Officer applied research projects were found that addressed succession planning. Fewer articles and reports were found that identifying the improvement of intellectual capacity and leadership, influencing decision-makers and developing support and no literature was found that specifically identified linkage between these concepts. A detailed literature review was conducted at the California State University, Los Angeles Library in February and March 2005 and a literature review was conducted at the City of Huntington Beach Central Library in March 2005.

Personal Interview

Two personal interviews were conducted to provide relevant data for this applied research project. The first interview was conducted on March 1, 2005 with Andrea Cutler, Human Resources Analysis for the City of Monterey Park Fire, to gain background knowledge on the number of external candidates hired into chief officer positions within the Monterey Park Fire Department. The second interview was conducted on March 8, 2005 with Tim Murphy, Fire Chief for the City of Monterey Park, to gain insight into the importance career development plays in the selection of candidates for chief officer positions.

Questionnaires

Two questionnaires were utilized as the foundation for data collection relative to the use of succession planning with other fire agencies in the region and the perceived effectiveness and support of the use of succession planning within the Monterey Park Fire Department.

In regards to the use of succession planning within other fire agencies in the region, respondents were asked to provide data to determine how other organizations influence decision makers to promote qualified individuals from internal pools of candidates. Organizational profile information, the practices employed in the hiring of individuals into chief officer positions, the amount of internal control over those promotions and the use of succession planning were asked of the respondents.

In regards to the effectiveness and acceptance of succession planning within the Monterey Park Fire Department, respondents were asked to provide their opinions to the questions related to determining the level of support to instituting a succession plan. The use of succession planning to better prepare internal candidates for advancement, whether the use of succession planning would gain support from external decision-makers, whether succession planning would improve moral and improve the sense of purpose and direction and the respondents willingness to participate in succession planning was asked.

All questionnaires had the support and approval of the Fire Chief, as well as the support of the Monterey Park Firefighter's Union.

Assumptions and Limitations

An assumption was made that all respondents to the questionnaires understood the questions and had the knowledge and desire to answer them accurately and truthfully. Another assumption was that the respondents understood that the questionnaires were anonymous and that the results would not and could not be used to affect their position within the organization, thereby skewing their responses.

Several limitations impacted the study. Firstly, the use of succession planning within other fire agencies was restricted to the 33 regional fire departments. The profile did not include a broader scope of departments, including local, county, state and private fire agencies and it did not consider the use of succession planning in other governmental and non-governmental service providers. Secondly, all questionnaires were administered on a voluntary basis with limited response from the questionnaire sent to regional fire agencies. All 12 Fire Captains who were asked to respond to the effectiveness and acceptance of succession planning questionnaire responded, giving 100 percent participation. However, only 18 of the 33, or 55 percent, of the surveys distributed to regional fire departments were returned.

Style Statement

This applied research project was written following the style and format of the Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association, 5th Edition, as approved by the National Fire Academy. The style is appropriate for the author given the entrance date into the Executive Fire Officer Program.

RESULTS

The literature review, personal interviews with the City of Monterey Park Fire Chief and the City of Monterey Park Human Resources Analysis, as well as responses from two questionnaires regarding succession planning provided the following results:

Question One

How could intellectual capacity and leadership be built, or improved, to create a pool of competitive candidates worthy of advancement?

Instilling the value of learning and the worth of knowledge in employees is an essential practice for any organization wanting to progress. As noted by Beazley, Boenisch & Harden (2002):

“...the American economy has moved from the Industrial Age to the Information Age and, in the process, from an industrial economy to what has been termed the knowledge economy...Knowledge has replaced capital as the scarce source factor of production and so has become the dominant economic force in business. As the importance of knowledge increase and knowledge loss accelerates, the negative impact of knowledge loss on organizations rises exponentially. The effect is predictable and costly” (xii).

It is apparent, that today’s business setting, be it public or private, must create an environment that fosters learning, embraces growth and demands employees keep up with the ever-changing landscape or transition out.

The training and educational requirements for advancement within the Monterey Park Fire Department, particularly to the company officer and chief officer position, has steadily become more encouraged and as of late, required in the testing process. Several

years ago a job bulletin would list advanced education and training as desirable, but today, if you don't have an Associates Degree from a junior college you will not qualify for the captain promotional exam and if you don't have a Bachelor Degree from a four-year college and advanced certification from the State Fire Marshal's Office, you won't qualify for the battalion chief promotional exam (Tim Murphy, Fire Chief, City of Monterey Park, personal communications, March 8, 2005).

The Monterey Park Fire Department would be well served, in starting this new endeavor towards creating a learning organization, by identifying key positions. As Rothwell (1994) points out, "A key position is defined as one that exerts critical influence on organizational activities – operationally, strategically, or both. Key positions have traditionally been viewed as those in the pinnacle of the organization's chain of command" (p. 144). Once the key positions are identified, a more structured curriculum for developing the skill sets required for advancement could be introduced.

Several well-established methods should be utilized in improving intellectual capacity and leadership skills. Beazley, Boenisch and Harden (2002) refer to this process as harvesting knowledge and state the techniques "range from card sorting and simulations to process analysis and focused discussions to diagramming and concept mapping to interviews and questionnaires" (p. 144). Rothwell (1994) includes additional approaches to building intellectual capacity under a concept of competency assessment that he identifies as:

"...those competencies (an underlying characteristic of an employee, such as a motive, trait, skill, aspect of one's self-image, social role, or a body of knowledge, which results in effective and/or superior performance in a job) that are required

for satisfactory or exemplary job performance within the context of the person's job roles, responsibilities and relationships in an organization and its internal and external environments" (p. 152).

Yet another strategy for improving leadership skills recommends using 360 degree feedback. Survey content should include the following features; 1) Use fewer than 70 items, offering both qualitative and quantitative questions 2) Selection of raters should include a minimum of three in each category 3) Feedback reports should give a item-level detail and written comment response 4) Development of support, including one-on-one coaching should follow-up (all companies should look at the effectiveness of their post-feedback programs) 5) Use of data should include collection for the purpose of development only, thereby not hampering buy-in and effectiveness 6) Program evaluation should consider formally evaluating the 360 program by looking at changes in manager behaviors after feedback (The 3D/Group Inc., 2004).

Finally, the Monterey Park Fire Department should develop specific key strategies for internal development. Rothwell (1994) identifies seven key strategies to build intellectual capacity and leadership and how the proper use of each strategy, reflected in table 2.

Table 2
Key Strategies for Development

STRATEGY	HOW TO USE IT
Off-the-job degree programs Sponsored by colleges/universities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clarify job related courses tied to work • Requirements of key position • Identify courses related to individual needs • Tie work requirements to degree/course requirements, if possible
Off-the-job public seminars sponsored by vendors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Compare work requirements to the instructional objectives indicated by information about the off-the-job seminar
In-house classroom courses tailor-made for employees	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Define specific instructional objectives that are directly related to work requirements in key positions • Use the course to achieve instructional objectives for many individuals
Unplanned on-the-job training	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Match up a high-potential employee with an exemplary performer in a key position • Permit long-term observation of the exemplar by the high potential
Planned on-the-job training	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop a detailed training plan based on a “tell, show, do, follow-up approach” to instruction
Planned mentoring program	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Match up individuals who may establish useful mentor-protégé relationships. • Provide training to mentors on effective mentoring skills and to protégé on the best ways to take advantage of mentoring relationships
Planned job rotation programs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop specific learning contract that clarifies the learning objectives to be achieved by the rotation. • Ensure that the work activities by which the individual gains experience are directly related to future work requirements in key positions • Monitor work progress through periodic feedback to the individual and through performance appraisal geared to rotation and related to future advancement

Note: Table by Rothwell (pps. 233-237).

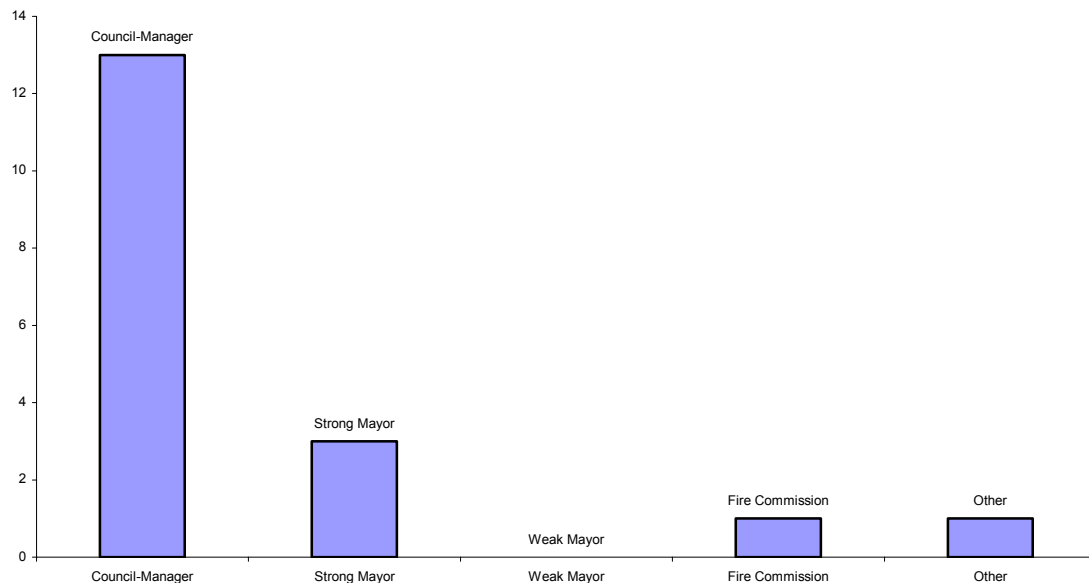
Question Two

How have other organizations influenced decision-makers to promote qualified individuals from internal candidate pools?

Based on the responses from a succession planning questionnaire emailed to 33 fire departments within Los Angeles County (of which 18 replied), related to how their respective organization has utilized career development and show-cased talents of employees for organizational advancement, the answer to how other organizations have gained support becomes evident.

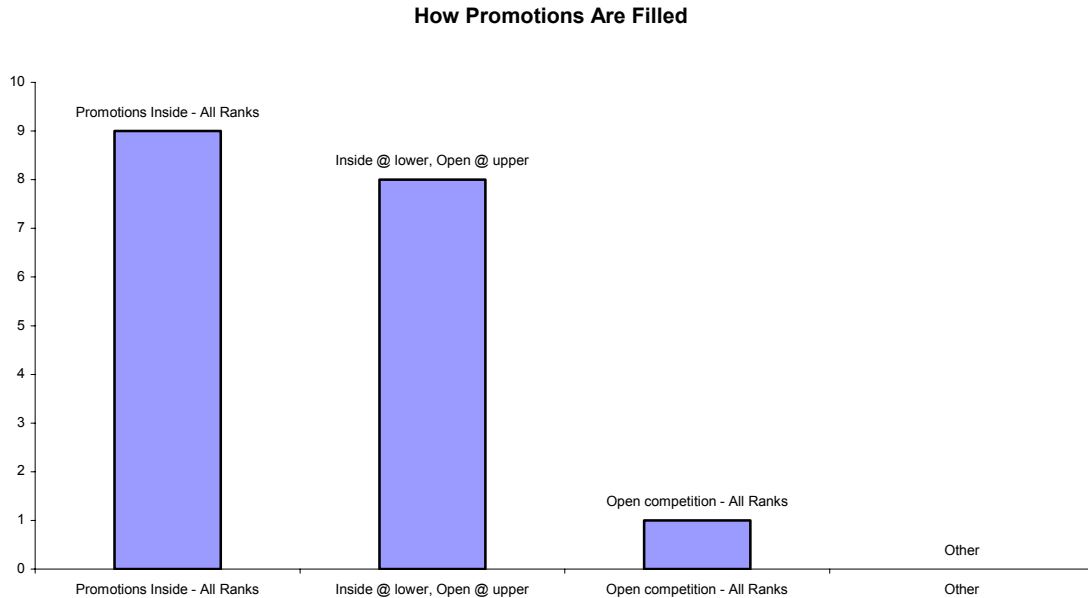
Question one of the succession planning survey asks what is the form of government used in your organization to develop correlation to the Council-Manager form of government used in Monterey Park. Table 3 identifies 13 of the 18 respondents are in an organization that uses the Council-Manager form of government, three organizations have a strong mayor, zero have a weak mayor, one utilizes a fire commission and one has the County Board of Supervisors overseeing operations.

Table 3
Succession Planning Questionnaire
Form of Government



Question two of the survey asked how promotions have historically been filled within the organization. Table 4 identifies nine of the respondents indicated that the organization held promotional only at all ranks with no outside competition, eight stated that they held promotional only at lower ranks (e.g. Engineer & Captain), but open competitive at higher ranks (e.g. Chief Officer & Fire Chief), and one stated the organization held open competitive tests at all ranks.

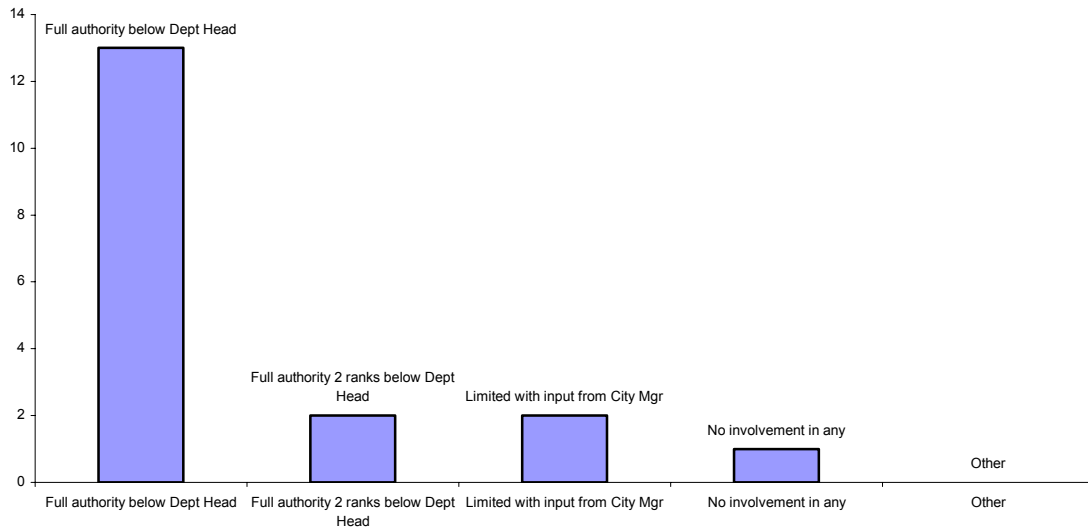
Table 4
Succession Planning Questionnaire
How Promotions Are filled



Question three of the survey determined the level of involvement the Department Head/Executive Officer was given during promotions within the organization. Table 5 indicated that thirteen of respondents state the department head had full authority for all promotions below the rank of department head. Two respondents indicate that the department head had full authority for all promotions two-ranks below department head, but involvement from the City Manager, Mayor or Commission on all promotions one rank below department head. Two respondents indicate the department head had limited authority for all promotions within the organization, but involvement from the City Manager, Mayor or Commission. And one respondent indicates that the department head had no involvement for any promotions.

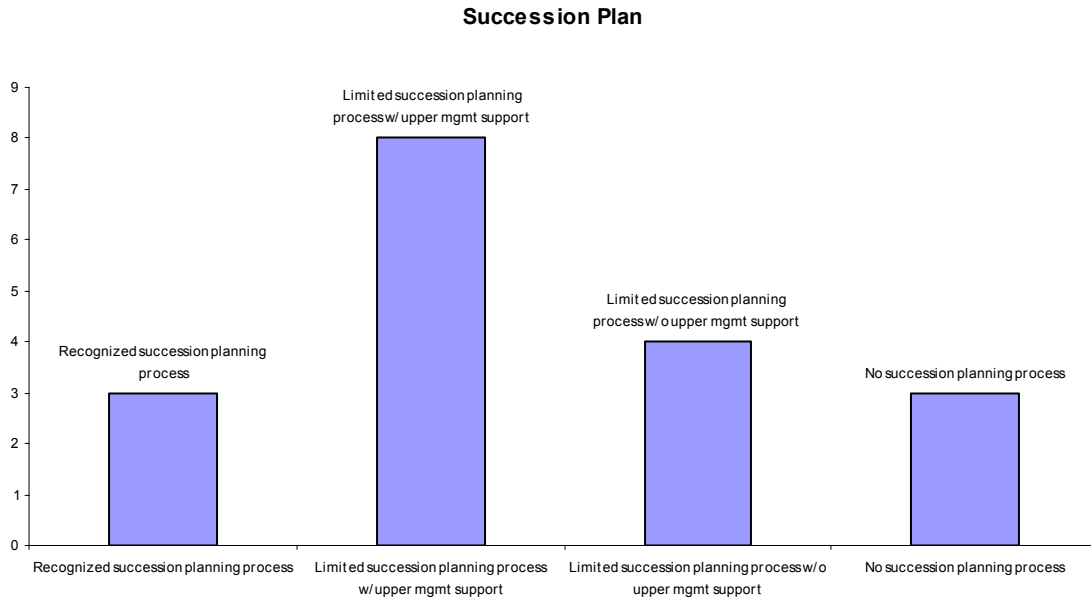
Table 5
Succession Planning Questionnaire
Promotional Involvement

Level of Authority & Involvement in Promotions



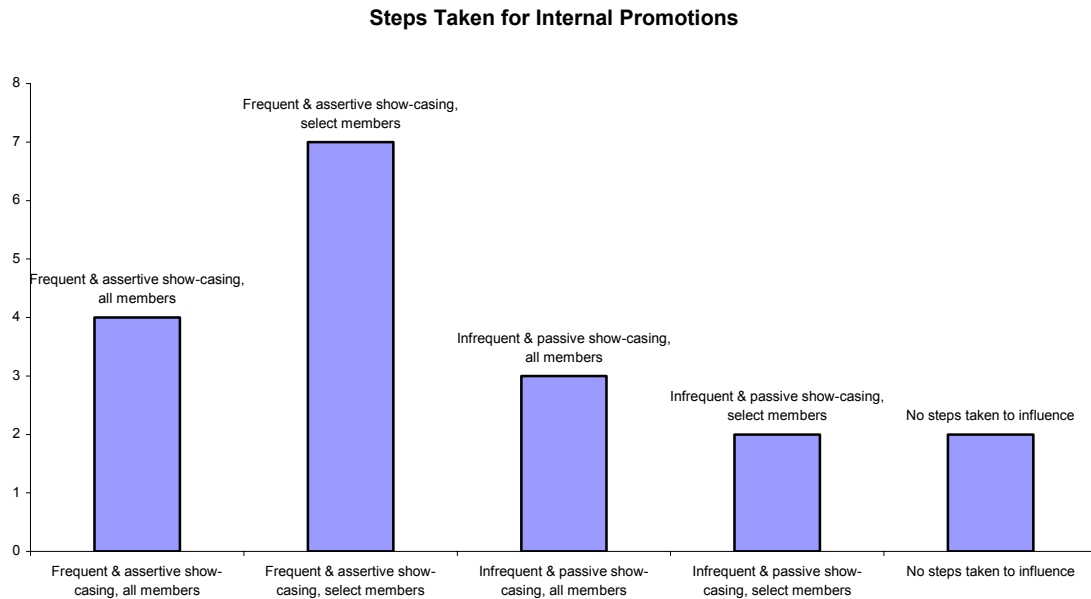
Question four of the succession planning questionnaire asked the level of involvement, if any, of an officially recognized succession plan. Table 6 shows three respondents indicated the organization has a recognized succession planning process, institutionalized within the department, with support of the City Manager, Mayor or Commission. Eight respondents indicated the organization has a limited succession planning process, not institutionalized within the department but with support of the City Manager, Mayor or Commission. Three respondents indicated the organization has a limited succession planning process, not institutionalized within the department and without the support of the City Manager, Mayor or Commission. And four respondents indicated the organization has no succession planning process.

Table 6
Succession Planning Questionnaire
Succession Plan



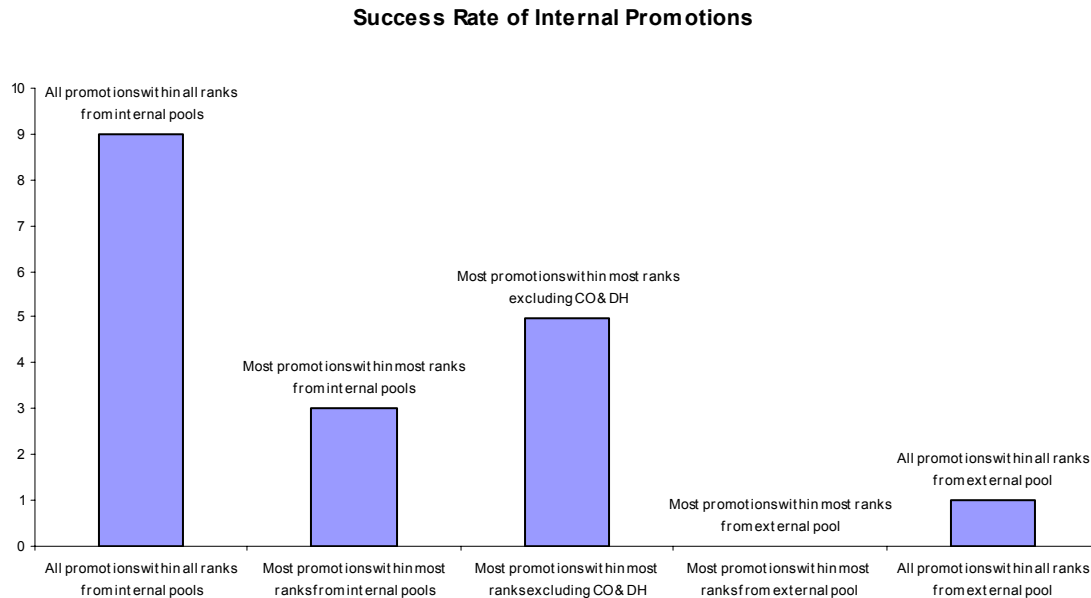
Question five of the succession plan survey asked what steps have leaders taken to influence decision-makers to promote qualified individuals from internal pools of candidates. Table 7 indicated Four respondents arrange frequent & assertive show-casing of talents and capabilities of all members of the organization. Seven respondents arrange frequent & assertive show-casing of talents and capabilities of select members within the organization. Three respondents stated the leaders arranged infrequent & passive show-casing of talents & capabilities of all members within the organization. Two respondents stated that the leaders allowed for infrequent & passive show-casing of talents & capabilities of select members within the organization. And two respondents indicated that the leaders took no steps to influence decision-makers.

Table 7
Succession Planning Questionnaire
Influencing Decision Makers



Question six of the succession planning survey asked the success rate of promotions from internal pools of candidates within the organization during the past seven years. Table 8 indicates nine respondents stated all promotions, within all ranks, including Chief Officers and Department Head, have come from internal pools of candidates. Three respondents stated most promotions, within most ranks, including Chief Officers and Department Head, have come from internal pools of candidates. Five respondents indicated that most promotions, within most ranks, excluding Chief Officer and Department Head, have come from internal pools. Zero respondents stated most promotions, within most ranks, including Chief Officer and Department Head, have come from outside competition. And one respondent stated all promotions, within all ranks, including Chief Officer and Department Head, have come from outside competition.

Table 8
Succession Planning Questionnaire
Success Rate of Internal Pools of Candidates



Question Three

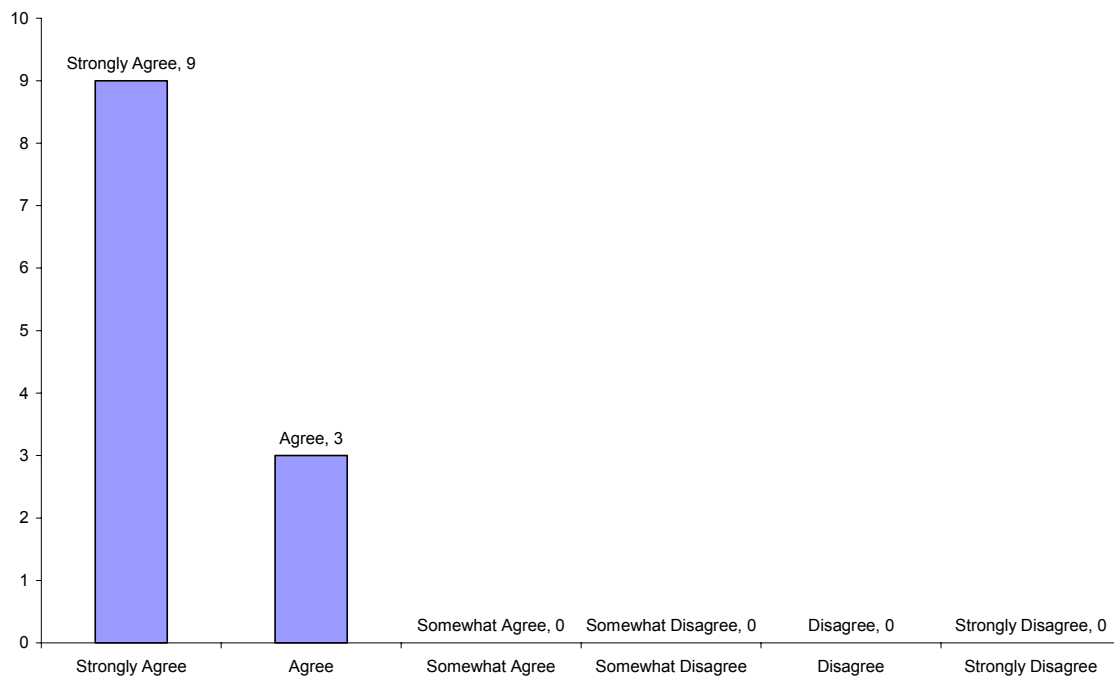
In what ways does support exist within the Monterey Park Fire department to institute a succession plan?

Based on the twelve email questionnaires sent to the Fire Captains of the Monterey Park Fire Department, a strong base of support is establish for some form of formal succession planning. Certainly getting the support and buy-in of the stakeholders is an important step in any new training process and would be an important first step in instituting succession planning with the key positions of this organization. It should be noted that the respondents were asked to rate their responses on a scale of 1 to 6 with the following criteria; 1- strongly agree, 2- agree, 3-somewhat agree, 4-somewhat disagree, 5-disagree, and 6- strongly disagree. The criterion of no comment was intentionally left out, requiring the respondents to make an opinionated decision.

Question one of the Captains questionnaire asked the respondents their position on the use of succession planning to better prepare internal candidates for promotion. Table 9 indicated that nine respondents strongly agreed with this statement, three agreed, and none of the respondents somewhat agreed, somewhat disagreed, disagreed or strongly disagreed.

Table 9
Captains Questionnaire
Preparing for Advancement

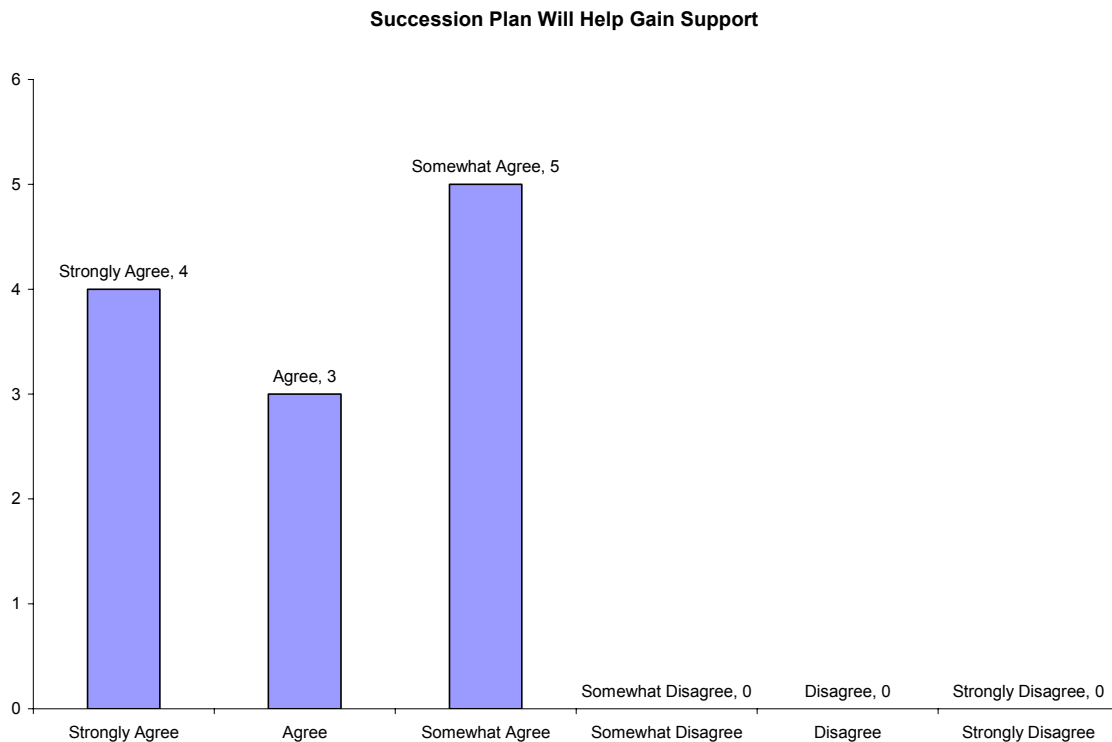
Succession Plan Will Prepare Internal Candidates



Question two of the Captains questionnaire asked if a formal succession plan would help gain support from external decision-makers (e.g. City Manager) for internal candidate advancement. Table 10 indicates that four respondents strongly agree, three

respondents agree, 5 respondents somewhat agree and none of the respondents somewhat disagreed, disagreed, or strongly disagreed.

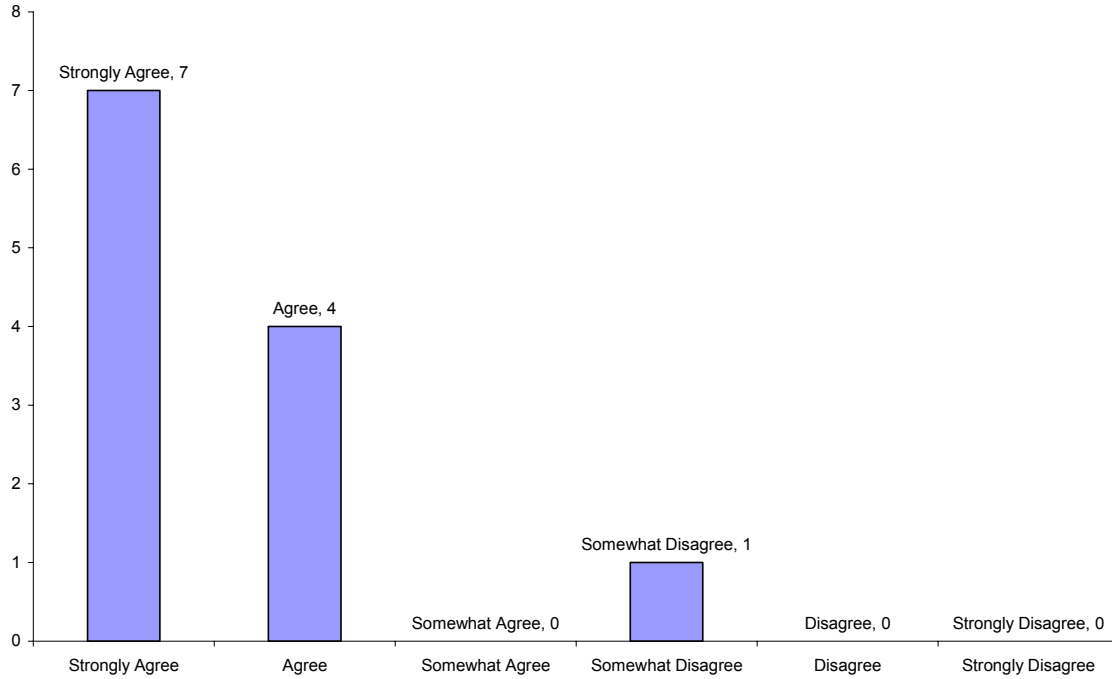
Table 10
Captains Questionnaire
Gaining Support



Question three of the Captains questionnaire asked if a formal succession plan would improve moral and give members of the department an improved sense of purpose and direction. Table 11 indicated that 7 respondents strongly agreed with the statement, four respondents agreed, no respondents somewhat agreed, one respondent somewhat disagreed, and none of the respondents disagreed or strongly disagreed.

Table 11
Captains Questionnaire
Improving Moral

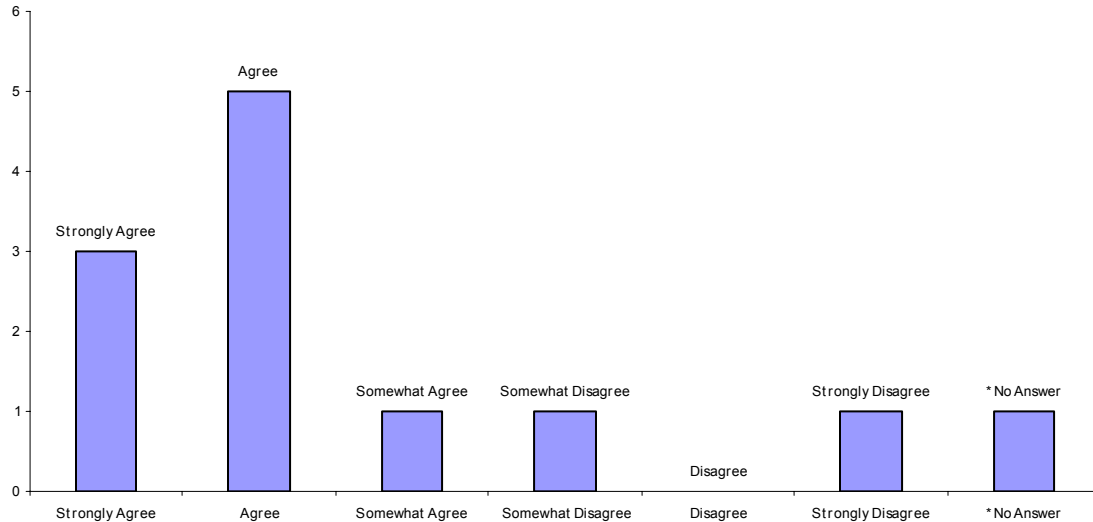
Succession Plan Will Improve Morale



Question four asked participants if they would be willing to participate in a formal succession planning process. Table 12 shows that three respondents strongly agreed, five respondents agreed, one respondent somewhat agreed, one respondent somewhat disagreed, no respondents disagreed and one respondent strongly disagreed. It should be noted that one respondent did not answer the question.

Table 12
Captains Questionnaire
Succession Plan Participation

Willing to Participate in Succession Planning Process *



DISCUSSION

The need to build, or more accurately to improve, the intellectual capacity and leadership of internal candidates concerned with career development and advancement, based on the interviews, literature review and the captains questionnaire results become evident. This process of learning will become a necessity if the Monterey Park Fire Department is to become a healthy organization that recognizes the effort put forth by its constituents through consistent internal advancement to chief officer positions. It is important to remember, however, that intellectual capacity is only one aspect to being well-rounded in terms of career development. Neff and Citron (1999) highlight this concept after interviewing Allied Signal CEO Larry Bossidy who stated:

“there was a time when I thought brains were everything. That view has dimmed recently. I think brains are important, but now I also look for a lot of collateral

assets. I look for people who are team-builders, good communicators, courageous people who don't get stuck with an idea. You need people who are more nimble, who have the ability to lead organizations in changing and tumultuous times comfortably, without panicking" (p. 64).

It is certainly easy to quantify the educational requirements and skill-sets for upward advancement throughout the organization, what is more important, however, is the less tangible attribute that is plaguing the Monterey Park Fire Department- that being apathy.

In order to get the organizational culture to shift from a despondent, lack-luster mentality to one of a high-powered, enthused, optimist climate, considerable effort needs to be spent motivating people. The educational and skill requirements will easily be met once the psyche of the organization is transformed. The Monterey Park Fire Department must become a place whose human assets mimic that of other established high performers. The people must develop the characteristics that Tichy (2002) describe in these high-performing organizations as:

- "1) Developing entrepreneurial spirit -This encourages associates to take responsibility and make on-the-spot decisions needed to respond creatively to customer needs.
- 2) Respect for all people -Talent and good people are everywhere, and we can't afford to overlook any source of good people; respect gives people the self-confidence to take risks in making decisions.
- 3) Building strong relationships with associates, customers, vendors and communities - Strong relationships create loyalty.

- 4) Doing the right thing, not just doing things right -This will build strong relationships.
- 5) Giving back to our communities as an integral part of doing business -This will also build strong relationships.
- 6) Shareholder return – This is the key metric success” (pps. 82-83).

These characteristics, coupled with the intellectual capacity and leadership growth, will certainly be a big step forward in improving internal candidates competitiveness.

It is always a good practice, particularly for smaller sized organizations, to look around the region to see what others are doing. This is true in regards to formal career development and succession planning. By determining what other organizations have done to influence decision-makers and promote qualified individuals from internal pools of candidates, the Monterey Park Fire Department may learn new strategies to incorporate towards building success.

The predominant response from those fire agencies surveyed, regarding the establishment and use of succession planning, indicate that a formal process for employee development and advancement does exist. Of the eighteen agencies that responded to the questionnaire, 78% (14 out of 18) indicated that some form of succession planning existed. 61% (11 out of 18) had a succession planning process that was supported by the City Manager, Mayor or Commission and 17% (3 out of 18) had a recognized succession planning process institutionalized within the department with support of the City Manager, Mayor or Commission. Monterey Park was one of the eighteen fire agencies that responded to the survey, and fell into the 22% category (4 out of 18) that had no succession planning process. Based on what others are doing, Monterey Park would be

well served to join the 78% sample group and establish a succession planning process. Ideally the process would group the Monterey Park Fire Department with the 22% of fire agencies that have a process that is institutionalized and supported by the City Manager.

In terms of building support from external decision-makers, those same eighteen fire agencies were asked to respond to the steps they take to gain support for qualified internal candidates. 89% (16 out of 18) of the respondents stated that some form of show-casing the talents and capabilities of members occurred. Of greater importance, 61% (11 out of 18) of the fire agencies stated that frequent and assertive show-casing of members capabilities and talents occurred and 22% (4 out of 18) responded that this process was done with all members of the department. Monterey Park Fire department was included in the sample group and indicated that they were in the 11% category of infrequent and passive show-casing of select members of the organization. Based on the responses from others, the leadership of the Monterey Park Fire Department would be well served to join the group that represents 22% of those surveyed and develop mechanisms for frequent and assertive show-casing of the talents and capabilities of all members of the organization.

To gain internal support and in doing so become a more responsive, progressive organization, action must be taken to focus on succession planning. After all, Charan, Drotter and Noel (2001) write:

“Succession planning is perpetuating the enterprise by filling the pipeline with high-performing people to assure that every leadership level has an abundance of these performers to draw from, both now and in the future... The focus should be performance (High performance in the presents is the admission price for future

growth and development). The pipeline demands a continuous flow (You can't just do succession planning from one leadership level, all levels must be included). The pipeline turns must be fully understood (people need to be working at the right level, and this cannot be determined unless the skills, time applications and work values for each level are clearly communicated and assessed). Short-term and long-term must be considered simultaneously (Its not enough to do succession planning that meet immediate needs)" (p. 167).

Certainly the first step in this succession planning methodology is to shift the culture of the Monterey Park Fire Department and establish a culture where learning and career development is an expected behavior from all members of the organization. The true answer will be found in doing not saying. Action taken by internal candidates (such as formal education, technical training, 360 degree evaluations, simulations and the like) that catch the executive attention of decision-makers will make a difference and slowly the process of looking outside of the organization for qualified candidates can be shifted. It is important to instill a sense of urgency and motivation to the key positions as well.

Twelve fire captains from the Monterey Park Fire Department were surveyed, regarding their opinions of the succession planning process and 100% of the sample group responding. An unprecedented evaluation of the organizations key position members was found in the results as all 100% of the respondents had agreement to strong agreement regarding the use of succession planning to improve internal candidates for promotion. In fact 75% (9 out of 12) strongly agreed that the process would benefit candidates. Furthermore 92% (11 out of 12) respondents were affirmative in their response that a succession planning process would improve morale and give members of

the department an improved sense of purpose and direction. 59% (7 out of 12) strongly agreed, 33% (4 out of 12) agreed and only 8% (1 out of 12) somewhat disagreed with the statement that morale would improve with succession planning. As discussed previously, however, the proof would come with action, not words.

The same twelve fire captains were asked if they would be willing to participate in a formal succession planning process. Although 76% (9 out of 12) responded in the affirmative, 16% (2 out of 12) responded in the negative and 8% (1 out of 12) did not answer. Only 25% (3 out of 12) fire captains answered strongly agreed, indicating they would be willing to participate in the process. These respondents are most likely the three individuals that are currently engaged in career development in hopes of advancement within the organization. This is very telling data and is more succinctly presented by O'Toole(1995), who write "the general average of mankind are not only moderate in intellect, but also moderate in inclination. In other words, people tend to be satisfied with their unsatisfactory lot" (p. 236).

The results of this study have identified several opportunities for improvement throughout the Monterey Park Fire Department. Certainly both formal and informal learning strategies can be employed, whereby the key positions of the organization can begin to improve in the intellectual capacity and leadership ability. Once the key positions have been established in this new learning climate then the entire workforce can be included in the processes, thereby ensuring leadership improvement at all levels of the department. Based on data from the questionnaires sent to the 33 regional fire agencies, of which eighteen agencies responded, several winning strategies can be utilized to

improve the capabilities of influencing external decision-makers. And finally, support can and must be gained from internal stakeholders for any proactive movement to occur.

Certainly all of the activities discussed evolve around the establishment of a formal succession planning process that would have the following organizational implications:

1. Identifying the practices, both formally and informally, that will improve intellectual capacity and leadership will give solid direction to all members, in relation to improving skill sets and preparing for upward mobility. Even those individuals not interested in advancement will benefit from a culture of learning and will become the true leaders at their respective level within the organization.
2. Improving the influence capabilities on the external decision-makers will have a profound effect on the entire organization, not just those members interested in advancement. Pointing a positive spot-light on all members of the department will improve relations with city leaders, will give due recognition to the workforce putting forward the effort and may have carry-over in many facets of operations (e.g. budgetary requests, salary and benefit negotiations, ect).
3. Developing support to institute a formal succession planning process is the most important step in the cycle and will be the first step in changing the culture of the Monterey Park Fire Department. Concentrating on the twelve captains as a core group of key positions must be the initial target and once

support is garnered from the captains the remaining members of the organization can be included.

RECOMMENDATIONS

This applied research project was a starting point for the Monterey Park Fire Department to develop and institute a formal succession planning process. In doing so, a shift in the culture of the organization would occur and the department would begin to develop into an organization that respects, demands and acknowledges hard work, training and education.

The following recommendations should be adopted by the Monterey Park Fire Department:

1. Following the detailed literature review that included a myriad of information regarding succession planning, the Monterey Park Fire Department would be well served in contracting with a professional consultant familiar with succession planning development and implementation. Certainly having a sound formal succession plan would eliminate some of the resistance and deter those opposing the change from pointing out deficiencies that would otherwise occur if the planning process were established by in-house personnel. The consultant should be familiar with positive steps to engage, as well as pitfalls to avoid, in the implementation phase of the process.
2. Mainly focused on operational issues, the twelve company officers of the department hold mid-manager positions and are responsible for ensuring daily service delivery is performed in an effective and efficient manner, employee

discipline and motivation occurs, training is consistent with established standards, coordination, control and communication of daily functions are met and a number of ancillary functions related to both operational and strategic functions. Certainly, nowhere in the organization would employee development be more beneficial as a starting point than the company officer rank. A detailed plan including both formal and informal learning objectives should be developed for the company officers. This would become a mandatory practice for all captains and would include those skill sets required to effectively perform at the company officer level as well as one level above.

3. Upon successful implementation of the succession planning process with the twelve company officers, the plan should be “rolled out” to the remainder of the department members. The goal would be to develop an organizational culture whereby education, training and growth is an expectation of every employee.
4. The formal leadership of the department, namely the fire chief and four battalion chiefs, should develop a marketing strategy that would highlight the achievements and advancements of every member within the department. Newspaper articles, live presentations before City Council, presentations before department heads and one-on-one time with the City Manager, acknowledging the efforts of fire department members, should be the focus of this plan.
5. Realizing that today’s fire service exists in rapidly changing environments,

The Monterey Park Fire Department must enter the succession planning process with an understanding that organizational change, if the goal is to have an effective organization, never ends. It would be an appropriate use of resources in directing the succession planning consultant to educating and motivating the stakeholders within the organization, of the importance of change, progress and most importantly support of such activities. Upon completion of the consultants motivational approach(s), it will be the job of the stakeholders themselves to continue the change process and move the organization forward through the generations.

6. A review process should be included in the succession planning model, which looks at the effectiveness of learning and growth, as well as the continuation of support towards change. This evaluation should be completed at least semi-annually.

APPENDIX 1

National Fire Academy Executive Fire Officer Program Succession Planning Questionnaire

Please answer the following questions by checking the one answer that best describes your organization in response to developing statistical analysis for the following research question:

How have other organizations influenced decision-makers to promote qualified individuals from internal pools of candidates?

1) What is the form of government used in your organization?

- ☐ a) Council-Manager
- ☐ b) Strong Mayor
- ☐ c) Weak Mayor
- ☐ d) Fire Commission
- ☐ e) Other(Explain) _____

2) Historically how have promotions been filled within your organization?

- ☐ a) Promotional only at all ranks with no outside competition
- ☐ b) Promotional only at lower ranks (e.g. Engineer & Captain), but open competitive at higher ranks (e.g. Chief Officer & Fire Chief)
- ☐ c) Open competitive at all ranks
- ☐ d) Other(Explain) _____

3) What level of involvement is the Department Head/Executive Officer given during promotions within the organization?

- ☐ a) Full Authority for all promotions below the rank of Department Head
- ☐ b) Full Authority for all promotions two-ranks below Department Head, but involvement from City Manager, Mayor or Commission on all promotions one rank below Department Head
- ☐ c) Limited Authority for all promotions within organization, but involvement from City Manager, Mayor or Commission
- ☐ d) No involvement for any promotion
- ☐ e) Other (Explain) _____

Questionnaire P. 2

- 4) In terms of an official succession plan, which statement best describes your organization?
- ☐a) The organization has a recognized succession planning process, institutionalized within the department, with support of the City Manager, Mayor or Commission
 - ☐b) The organization has a limited succession planning process, not institutionalized within the department but with support of the City Manager, Mayor or Commission.
 - ☐c) The organization has a limited succession planning process, not institutionalized within the department and without the support of the City Manager, Mayor or Commission
 - ☐d) The organization has no succession planning process
- 5) What step have leaders within your organization taken, in response to influencing decision-makers to promote qualified individuals from internal pools of candidates?
- ☐a) Frequent & assertive show-casing of talents and capabilities of all members of the organization.
 - ☐b) Frequent & assertive show-casing of talents and capabilities of select members within the organization
 - ☐c) Infrequent & passive show-casing of talents & capabilities of all members within the organization
 - ☐d) Infrequent & passive show-casing of talents & capabilities of select members within the organization
 - ☐e) No steps taken to influence decision-makers
- 6) What has been the success rate of promotions from internal pools of candidates within your organization during the past 7 years?
- ☐a) All promotions, within all ranks, including Chief Officers and Department Head, have come from internal pools of candidates
 - ☐b) Most promotions, within most ranks, including Chief Officers and Department Head, have come from internal pools of candidates
 - ☐c) Most promotions, within most ranks, excluding Chief Officer and Department Head, have come from internal pools
 - ☐d) Most promotions, within most ranks, including Chief Officer and

- Department Head, have come from outside competition
- ☐ e) All promotions, within all ranks, including Chief Officer and Department Head, have come from outside competition

Appendix 2

National Fire Academy Executive Fire Officer Program Monterey Park Fire Department Captains Questionnaire

The following questionnaire will provide vital information for an applied research project evaluating the usefulness of succession planning within the Monterey Park Fire Department. Your feedback will be completely confidential and will assist in answering the following question:

In what ways does support exist within the Monterey Park Fire Department to institute a succession plan?

Please check only one box that best represents your opinion, using the following format:

1-Strongly Agree 2- Agree 3- Somewhat Agree 4-Somewhat Disagree 5-Disagree 6-Strongly Disagree

- 1) A formal succession plan will better prepare internal candidates for advancement within the department.

1)☐ 2)☐ 3)☐ 4)☐ 5)☐ 6)☐

- 2) A formal succession plan will help gain support from external decision-makers (e.g. City Manager) for internal candidate advancement.

1)☐ 2)☐ 3)☐ 4)☐ 5)☐ 6)☐

- 3) A formal succession plan will improve moral and give members of the department an improved sense of purpose and direction.

1)☐ 2)☐ 3)☐ 4)☐ 5)☐ 6)☐

- 4) You would be willing to participate in a formal succession planning process.

1) ☐ 2) ☐ 3) ☐ 4) ☐ 5) ☐ 6) ☐

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