Performance Evaluation In

The Miami Township Fire & EMS Department

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CERTIFICATION STATEMENT

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ABSTRACT

Performance evaluations are considered to be an important component of employee development and are considered a means for an organization to provide its employees with constructive feedback that is directly related to the job that they perform. The goal is often aimed at creating engaged employees who feel valued in their position, who know and support the organization's goals and objectives, and who seek to learn how to develop and advance themselves in their professional lives. Often, performance evaluations constructed and administered poorly, resulting in a sense of animosity towards the process from the viewpoint of the evaluator and the employee who is being evaluated. This can cause the evaluation process to lose validity and value, thereby making it irrelevant and even detrimental to an organization.

The problem that this study addressed was that Miami Township Fire & EMS (MTFEMS) was not consistently providing its employees with constructive feedback through annual performance evaluations, thus resulting in the unintended reinforcement of poor performance and potentially reduced organizational functionality. The purpose of this descriptive study was to identify and describe how, or if, MTFEMS conducts performance evaluations, how some other departments conduct performance evaluations, what existing performance evaluation tools or processes might be useful for MTFEMS, and what the consequences of not performing performance evaluations might be.

The following questions were answered by this descriptive research:

1. How does MTFEMS currently conduct performance evaluations?

2. How do some other Fire and EMS departments, and other agencies in general, that are similar to MTFEMS conduct performance evaluations?

3. What existing performance evaluation tools or processes might be useful for MTFEMS?

4. What are the consequences, if any, when performance evaluations are not conducted?

The descriptive research was conducted through the use of surveys that were distributed via email internally to officers within MTFEMS, and externally to various fire and EMS organizations that were part of the Southwestern Ohio Fire Chiefs' Alliance. The goal was to ascertain what was being done already in MTFEMS, what others were doing related to performance evaluations in the field of public safety, the feelings towards evaluations in their current form (both internally and externally), and to find out what components might prove to be beneficial to MTFEMS in the revision process. Fortunately, the information that was obtained proved the need for a formal performance evaluation process, as well as some valuable insights into components that could be incorporated into the final version of the revised MTFEMS evaluation system. Based on these findings, a recommendation was made to create a new performance evaluation process for MTFEMS that incorporated current job descriptions, industry standards, and operational components that were unique to the department. This was recommended in order to arrive at a customized evaluation process that was meaningful for the employees and the organization.

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INTRODUCTION

Statement of the Problem

Abraham Maslow conducted research related to human motivation and found that the basic needs that all humans share center on feelings of safety, security, and belongingness (Maslow, 1971), and job satisfaction can be contribute towards fulfilling those needs (Huitt, 2007). How is job satisfaction actually achieved though? One method of contributing to an employee's job satisfaction is through the collection and application of effective, timely, and constructive feedback from supervisors through annual performance evaluations (United States Office of Personnel Management (OPM), 2014).

The problem that this study addressed was that Miami Township Fire & EMS (MTFEMS) was not consistently providing its employees with constructive feedback through annual performance evaluations, thus resulting in the unintended reinforcement of poor performance and potentially reduced organizational functionality. Historically, MTFEMS had done performance evaluations for new employees during their probationary period as a means of keeping them informed about their performance. A formal evaluation was given after six-months and one-year of service. After that, most all of the employees never received another performance evaluation unless there was a specific need. This left MTFEMS employees without the means to be informed about opportunities to improve and advance in the organization, and left them without an understanding of how to reach their full potential.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this descriptive study was to identify and describe how, or if, MTFEMS conducts performance evaluations, how some other departments conduct performance evaluations, what existing performance evaluation tools or processes might be useful for MTFEMS, and what the consequences of not performing performance evaluations might be.

Research Questions

The following questions were answered by this descriptive research:

5. How does MTFEMS currently conduct performance evaluations?

6. How do some other Fire and EMS departments, and other agencies in general, that are similar to MTFEMS conduct performance evaluations?

7. What existing performance evaluation tools or processes might be useful for MTFEMS?

8. What are the consequences, if any, when performance evaluations are not conducted?

BACKGROUND AND SIGNIFICANCE

The Miami Township Fire and EMS department is a combination department that is comprised of 99 sworn personnel and one Administrative Assistant. The sworn personnel are split between career and part-time, with a few volunteers still serving the community in a limited fashion. MTFEMS is a traditional, authoritative, pyramid-shaped organization, with a Fire Chief as the leader of the department, supported by one Assistant Chief, one Division Chief of Support Services, two Administrative Captains, three Shift Captains, and six Station Lieutenants. Personnel are distributed equally across three 24 hour shifts. Each individual works 24 hours on-duty and then has 48 hours off-duty.

According to Miami Township policy, each employee of the fire department is expected to have a performance evaluation once every twelve months (Miami Township, 2014). The only exception is when they are first hired, when they are required to have a performance evaluation at the six month mark, and then again at the completion of their one-year probationary period..

Part-time employees play a pivotal role in the daily staffing of MTFEMS. They are given a lot of responsibility and are treated like the career personnel in the organization in order to give them the opportunity to continually "interview" for a career position. Career hiring in MTFEMS is done exclusively from the part-time ranks. Regardless of the duties that are being performed during a shift, all personnel are expected to participate, regardless of rank or payroll designation. Part-time employees are engaged in the same daily activities and duties as the career personnel. In some cases, part-time employees hold career positions at neighboring fire departments and are highly trained in specific disciplines in fire and EMS. Many are trained specialists in hazardous materials, confined space rescue, rope rescue, or water rescue and afford MTFEMS the ability to utilize and benefit from their expertise.

Employees that are working in part-time positions need a mechanism for constructive feedback related to their job performance if they desire to obtain a career position with MTFEMS. It is the responsibility of the department to provide its members with that information in an effort to recruit the best employees. The same is true for the career personnel who might want to be eligible for promotion. The employee needs to have a sense of their performance within the organization in order to structure their behavior and skill set.

It is widely believed that performance evaluations are not being done regularly in MTFEMS. Only personnel that are working on their "probationary period" are given evaluations, once at the six month mark and again at the completion of one year of employment, just prior to being released from probation. The employee's first-line supervisors perform the evaluation, along with a self-evaluation that is submitted by the employee. Short of that, there is no true coaching or feedback related to this process. This program has been inconsistently done and is wrought with inconsistencies. There has been no formal training given to the officers who perform these evaluations and the employees have never been made aware of the criteria that they are evaluated against. The ability to refer to a formal job description and a list of criteria that are used for grading would provide each employee with valuable information about how they are to be evaluated.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The science of human resource management and its principles illustrate the importance of providing employees with meaningful feedback regarding their job performance and is considered "an integral part of an organization's performance management system" (Hays, Kearney, & Coggburn, 2009, p. 107). In many organizations, performance appraisals are used as a means of developing employees and enhancing their productivity (Klingner, Nalbandian, & Llorens, 2009). The process is supposed to be able to provide the employee with "feedback on their work, leading to greater clarity regarding organizational expectations and to a more effective channeling of employee ability and effort" (Klingner et al., p. 250). Furthermore, the organization can use performance evaluation in a more strategic fashion by trying to find common links between the goals and objectives of the organization and assisting the individual employee with trying to meet those expectations (Klingner et al.). The difficulty comes from trying to line all employees up with the same organizational goals and objectives, as the individuals have differing perspectives and perceptions about how they can achieve compliance with the performance measurements. Additionally, individual value systems are unique and varied. It is for this reason that performance evaluation processes and methods incorporate a technical aspect that "focuses on developing an instrument that accurately measures individual performance in order to identify an individual's strengths and weaknesses" (Klingner et al., p. 274).

Authors in the field of human resources have taken the position that once an adequate performance evaluation tool has been developed and tested, it must be continually trained on and exercised (Klingner, et al., 2010; Hays, et al., 2009). Undoubtedly, there are also errors that will be committed by the evaluators who conduct the evaluations of their employees, since these

processes rely on humans evaluating other humans. Hays, et al., points out that humans are fallible, and with that comes an expected error rate that can be associated with any evaluation process (2009). Any performance evaluation system should work to minimize the incidence of error or partiality (Klingner, et al., 2009). Risher (2008) emphasized the necessity for "training for both managers and the individuals being appraised in the use of the system as well as in the skills and behaviors important to the process" (p. 5).

The type of performance evaluation system that is to be enacted by a department is a unique choice and must be one that tends to fit the organization well based on the structure and needs of the organization (Klingner, et al., 2009). Furthermore, the individuals who will be performing the evaluations and those being evaluated should have an active role in designing the measurement tool, as well as defining the associated job descriptions that employees will be measured against (Delpo, 2005; Morgan, 2006).

One integral component of the performance evaluation process should be the link between the evaluation criteria and the existing job descriptions (Croom and Briese, 2015). This link assists the reviewer by providing objective and measurable criteria, but also allows the employee to have the opportunity to reference what they are being measured against (Croom and Briese, 2015). Job descriptions and industry-accepted standards, such as those found in the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) Standards 1001, 1002, and 1021, provide templates for evaluation criteria. NFPA 1001 provides basic standards regarding the job performance requirements for firefighters, which should be reflected in a job description (NFPA, 2013). NFPA 1001 Technical Committee of Fire Fighter Professional Qualifications recommends that "the firefighter candidate shall meet the general knowledge and skills requirements and the job performance requirements of Chapter 5" (NFPA, 2013, Section 1.3.5). It goes on to provide

detailed descriptions of the various job functions that are required of someone holding the position of a firefighter. The same is true of NFPA 1002, which outlines the skills and requirements for an apparatus/operator, and NFPA 1021 which provides criteria for Fire Officers. Each of these standards provides basic material that can be used to develop job descriptions, which can then be used as a part of the overall performance evaluation process (NFPA, 2013).

Other literature that is pertinent to the fire service supports the need for a performance evaluation process to be established and conducted regularly. The Croom and Briese (2015) state in *The Fire Chief's Handbook* that "to assess individual performance, some type of personnel appraisal or evaluation system must be established and in use". While there are many forms of performance evaluation systems, Croom and Briese (2015) note the need for formal written documentation that can be kept on file for future reference. Additionally, Croom and Briese (2015) illustrate the need to ensure that the performance measurement standards are understood by both the evaluator and the person being evaluated so that there is a shared and consistent understanding of how the evaluation is being conducted. A final point that Croom and Briese (2015) make addresses the need to have some form of summary to the evaluation. This is the part of the evaluation tool where both parties can make comments or final recommendations, as well as set goals for the next review period.

The International City/County Management Association publishes the *Managing Fire and Emergency Services* text, often referred to as the "ICMA Green Book", where they address performance evaluation as an integral component of the management's responsibilities to help promote safety and professional behavior in the workplace (Brehm, 2012). Brehm (2012) supports the position that evaluation processes can be varied with regard to content and format,

but stipulates that "employees are more likely to accept and understand feedback that has direct links to job performance via a job task analysis". Additionally, Brehm (2012) notes that the evaluation process should be aimed at assisting with career development and overall improvement in individual performance. Brehm (2012) also placed emphasis on the need for the person that is being evaluated to conduct a self-evaluation, where they have the opportunity to focus on their own strengths and weaknesses related to the performance measurement criteria. In this portion of the evaluation process, the employee can also list career goals or objectives that can be discussed with their supervisor. Brehm (2012) summarized her position with a statement that appears to sum up the performance evaluation process when she stated that it "is an opportune time for members of the organization to reengage with the department's mission, purpose, and values."

PROCEDURES

The first portion of this study required an introspective review of the current performance evaluation process that was being used by MTFEMS. This was conducted by researching policies and procedures set forth by the Township, and what was currently being done at the department level. Additionally, an internal survey of all the existing MTFEMS officers was conducted in order to obtain their impressions about the current performance evaluation process and documentation tool. This survey was created electronically through the Google Docs online program and consisted of eleven multiple choice questions (Appendix 1: Internal MTFEMS Survey Tool). A link to the electronic survey was emailed out internally to the officers of the department. While not mandatory, part of the email asked for full participation from all of the officers, in order to gather as much data as possible. The survey was open and available for a period of fourteen (14) days. At the seven (7) day mark, a reminder about the survey was sent out that asked for those who had not already participated to consider participating and reminding them that the survey was only going to be available for another seven (7) days.

The survey questions were designed to be asked of the various levels of supervisors that exist within the department that have the responsibility for providing performance evaluations, which included the ranks of Station Lieutenant, Captain (both shift and administrative), Division Chief and Assistant Chief. Although each rank brought a different view to the overall performance evaluation process, each position had performed these evaluations and was familiar with the model that was currently used by MTFEMS. Additionally, each of the thirteen (13) officers had been in their current position for at least the last fifteen years; therefore they were able to provide a historical perspective that was beneficial to conducting this type of survey.

The second portion of the study involved the creation of a second survey tool through the use of the Google Docs online program that was designed for external distribution to other fire & EMS agencies, as well as other organizations that were thought to have similarities to MTFEMS (Appendix 2: External Survey Tool). This survey was distributed across the region and state through email distribution to approximately 350 recipients, although the number of "bad" email addresses was not readily known or available for inclusion in these procedures. At the least, 350 emails were identified as having had successful delivery as none resulted in "bounce back" according to the list serve administrator. This survey was comprised of eleven multiple-choice questions and was also not mandatory. The goal was to have a sample of at least fifteen responses.

The external survey was limited to eleven questions to be able to facilitate the ability for participants to take the survey without feeling burdened by the number of questions that it contained. Time was considered a factor, as many of the recipients were expected to have multiple responsibilities that were thought to limit their time spent on this type of survey. Additionally, it was known that the recipients would be receiving multiple requests for participation in surveys from other participants in the Ohio Fire Executive program. The questions themselves were derived from the author's needs and goals for his own department and were crafted in a way that would allow for comparison to other agencies that might be similar in size or type of operation. The final questions were drafted and sent to the OFE program reader that the author was assigned to for final input and approval. The format that they were presented to the survey participants in represents an attempt to create a logical flow to the questions that allows progression from one to another easily and in a structured format.

The survey questions were aimed at discovering the extent of the performance evaluation process for other fire and EMS agencies. Additionally, the survey sought to find out what level the reviewer engaged the employee who was being reviewed. This was done in an effort to find out if the organization's individual employees had an active role in their evaluation, and if they were able to provide feedback or comments.

The survey was emailed out and posted in the "open" status for thirty (30) days through the Google Docs link. Recipients in the original email distribution were not reminded about the survey during those thirty days, as it was thought that they had received numerous other requests for participation in other surveys. At the end of the thirty day period, the survey was closed and the results were collected from Google Docs and transferred to a Microsoft Excel spreadsheet for tabulation and analysis. This format provided added functionality to be able to analyze the data that the Google Docs format could not provide. From that information, some opportunities for improvement were gleaned for consideration of adoption by MTFEMS.

Definition of Terms

Full-time employee: a person who is employed by MTFEMS and who is required to work a 24
hour on, 48 hour off schedule that accounts for 2,096 hours worked in a calendar year.

Part-time employee: a person who is employed by MTFEMS and who works a variable shift
schedule and does not work in excess of 1,500 hours in a calendar year.

Performance evaluation: formal determination of an individual's job-related actions and their
outcomes within a particular position or setting.

Limitations of the Study

The main limitations of this study centered on the use of the survey tools, both internal and external. For the internal survey of the officers of MTFEMS, this survey was not made to be mandatory, so the participation returned eight completed surveys out of thirteen that were possible, leaving five officers that did not participate. In a department with such a small sampling of officers, greater participation would have yielded more feedback and the opportunity for more opinions on the current performance evaluation tool.

For the external survey, there were a few more limitations that were encountered. First, the invitation to participate in the survey was emailed out through one list serve that is operated by the Southwestern Ohio Fire Chiefs' Association, which is a sub-group of the Ohio Fire Chiefs' Association. This was done to help limit the responses to departments that were similar in nature and operation to MTFEMS, as many of the departments in that part of the state operate in a similar fashion with comparable structures. Perhaps this created too small of a sample size, as the email list was limited to 350 participants, but that was thought to be acceptable given the nature of this study. According to the email list serve administrator, all of the 350 email addresses that he had on file were considered to be valid, as none of the emails that he sent were returned as "undeliverable".

Another limitation of the external survey was the inclusion of comment boxes along with some of the questions. Originally, this was viewed as an attempt to gain additional insight or information that the respondent might have been able to offer. In review and in some instances, it created an avenue for the respondent to answer the question more in their own words than what the actual question was designed to produce. The ability to provide "ancillary" information created confusion at times in the answers, as the respondents appeared to be unclear about the

true intent of the specific question. This also illustrated that some of the questions might have been too vague, or attempted to gain too much information, where they should have been streamlined and focused more to be able to provide "yes or no" style answers. Additionally, the ability for a respondent to choose more than one selection on the Google Docs form appeared to create some confusion for some of the participants. This caused the data that was obtained to have some varied responses in areas where more specificity was sought.

The final limitation to the study was simply the unknown ability for people to participate. What is meant by this is that the person who received the email request might have received many additional requests to participate in other surveys, due to the nature of the OFE program and the shared email lists that exist between various groups and agencies. In some instances, participants may have received more than one email request and might have unknowingly completed the survey more than once, thereby diluting the data or compromising its validity. Furthermore, the email recipients might not have been the appropriate person to provide answers to the survey. From this point, they might have forwarded it along to another person to complete, leaving its completion status unknown, or the recipient may have felt compelled to complete the survey without having the full ability or information to do so. Unfortunately, there was no way to ascertain which of these limitations might have affected the data that was collected.

RESULTS

This descriptive research yielded ninety-four results that were returned in their entirety, out of 350 emails that were sent out with links to the external survey. For the internal officers of MTFEMS that were contacted directly, eight completed the survey in its entirety out of thirteen officers that were eligible to participate.

The study first illustrated that the current performance evaluation system that MTFEMS utilizes is not adequately matched to the needs of the department, nor is it done consistently at all levels of the organization. Secondly, the external surveys provided feedback on how other fire and EMS departments conducted their performance evaluations, including the types of measurement that they used, the various rank levels that were a part of the process, training that was done on the evaluation tool, how that tool provided feedback to the individual who was being reviewed, and ultimately, how well that evaluation fit the needs of that department. The input from the survey respondents allowed the author of the survey to have access to data regarding valuable components and concepts that would prove useful in restructuring the current performance evaluation tool for MTFEMS. The results of the survey did not answer one of the four research questions regarding the consequences of not conducting performance evaluations, but information was gleaned from the literature review that provided answers to this question. The various cited sources indicated that performance evaluations were an integral component of employee performance and that an absence or lack of use might be detrimental to the employee, as well as the organization.

The results (Appendix 2) of the internal survey (Appendix 1) illustrated that the current officers of MTFEMS did not feel that the current performance evaluation method adequately addressed the needs of the department, nor did it provide a fair assessment of the individual

employee. Additionally, the majority of the respondents did not believe that the job descriptions that were in place for the department were tied to the performance evaluations. Five of the eight respondents reported that they had not conducted a performance evaluation in the last year, three of which reported that they had not done an evaluation in over three years. This proved that performance evaluations were not being done routinely or consistently. The majority of the responses indicated that the officers felt that all members of MTFEMS should receive performance evaluations and that all ranks of the officer corps should participate in the process. The responses were split four and four when the respondents were asked whether or not they felt that that the current evaluation method provided the individual employee with the opportunity to receive a performance improvement plan or structured support that would assist them with achieving a higher score on their next evaluation. Overall, the results of this portion of the study illustrated an internal need and desire to revamp the performance evaluation process.

The results (Appendix 4) of the external surveys (Appendix 3) noted that eighty-six respondents indicated that their department currently performed annual performance evaluations. Of the eighty-six responses, seventy-six people indicated that every member of their department received an annual evaluation, with eight indicating that only the career members of their department received them, including the officers of the department. Furthermore, two people indicated that career members received evaluations, but the officers of the department did not, while seven responses indicated that they did not conduct annual evaluations. Next, a question was asked of the respondent to see if they felt that the current performance evaluation was tied directly to their existing job descriptions. For this question, fifty-six responses indicated that they felt that the evaluation was tied to the existing job descriptions, while twenty-eight did not feel

that this was the case. Five people did not answer this question and five others provided text answers that did not fit any pre-selected response to this question.

Question number four of the survey asked the respondent to describe the type of grading system that was in use for the evaluation tool. The choices were listed (Appendix 3) for them and forty-six answered that their evaluation tool used a combination of a numeric grading scale and text fields where the reviewer could provide comments or explanations for the grade that was selected. Eleven respondents had "text field" only evaluations, while twenty-four had numeric only evaluations. Seven people did not answer this question, and four others provided responses that did not fit one of the choices for this question. In question number five, the respondents were asked about who performed their evaluations. In response to this question, the respondents were allowed to select more than one choice, as various ranks were being represented. The results indicated that a majority of the respondents had officers involved in performing evaluations at the rank of lieutenant, captain, assistant chief, and chief. A follow up question was asked in question six about the frequency of training that these reviewers received, specifically related to conducting performance evaluations. Forty-five people indicated that that regular training was not conducted, seventeen stated that it was, nineteen said that it was only done initially and that no follow-up or continuing training occurred, and six respondents did not know.

Question seven asked if the person who was being evaluated was able to fill out a "self evaluation" as part of their review process. In this case, thirty-four responses indicated "yes", fifty-two said "no", three did not know and four people did not provide an answer. In a follow up to this question, question eight sought to find out if the person being evaluated was able to receive a "performance improvement plan" or some form of structured support to help them achieve a higher score on their next evaluation as part of the process. Fifty-two people said that

the person being evaluated received structured support to achieve a higher score in the subsequent evaluation, but they were not given a formal performance improvement plan. Twenty-three responses indicated that they received structured support and a performance improvement plan, while thirteen people indicated that the person being evaluated received neither, and six people did not know the answer to this question. For question nine, the respondent was asked if the person being evaluated was able to attach comments to their evaluation, or at least have the opportunity to discuss the results with their reviewer. Seventy-five people stated that both comments and discussion could be done, ten people said that the person being evaluated could not attach comments, but could discuss the results with their reviewer, three people stated that neither could occur, five did not answer this question, and only person wrote in an answer that did not fit any of the selections to this question.

Question ten asked if the respondent felt that the performance review or evaluation tool that was currently in use in their department adequately met their needs. In this instance, less than half of the respondents felt that this was the case (36), while the majority (53) felt that it did not meet the needs of the department. Only three people did not answer and two submitted explanations that did not fit the selections to this question. Finally, question eleven asked the respondent if they felt that their current performance evaluation provided a fair assessment of the individual employee. In this case, the majority of responses indicated that this was the case (50), while thirty-three people did not feel that the evaluation tool provided a fair assessment. Two people did not answer, and nine wrote in explanations that did not fit a selection to this question.

Upon completion of the eleven question survey, the survey was closed and the respondents were thanked for their time and participation. The results were collected by the Google Docs online program and were subsequently transferred into two separate Excel

spreadsheets for analysis of both the internal and external surveys. The results of both surveys

are listed in Appendix 2 and 4 respectively in summary form. Actual results associated with both

spreadsheets are available from the author that provides a detailed breakdown of each

respondent's answers to the questions. Neither the internal, nor external survey collected

demographic or identifying information from the respondents.

DISCUSSION

The results of the internal and external surveys, coupled with the information obtained in the literature review illustrate the importance of conducting fair and valid performance evaluations on a regular basis for employees of an organization. Overall, it was noted that these evaluations are in fact, important for both the employee and the employer, as supported by Hays, Kearney and Cogburn (2009). These same authors stated the need and importance to match the evaluation model to the structure and needs of the organization that is using it (2009). Croom and Briese (2015) postulated in the *Fire Chiefs' Handbook* that in order to be able to evaluate the performance of an individual in the organization, some form of evaluation tool must be created and used.

The results also illustrated the importance of the need to have evaluations that are tied to job descriptions and that involve objective criteria. These were found to be the most successful and meaningful for the individual employee, as well as the organization, as was supported by Brehm (2012). To ease with this process, the recommendations listed in NFPA 1001, 1002, and 1021 make it relatively easy for departments to create job descriptions and objective criteria for their performance evaluations. Ultimately, it comes down to communication between the employer and the employee related to the individual's performance in their job, and how that aligns with the goals and objectives of the organization. This concept was supported by Klingler, Nalbandian & Llorens (2009) with their proposal that feedback to the employee allowed them a better opportunity to understand the expectations and goals of the organization, in order to be able to align themselves more closely with those goals.

Training was also noted to be a crucial component from the literature review and the survey results. Many respondents did not appear to feel that they had received the proper

training, or that they might have had it once, but nothing past that point. That supported Risher's (2008) statement regarding the importance of training for both the reviewer and the person who is being evaluated. Even deeper into the support of the training concept was the belief that everyone who is involved in the process should have the opportunity for input into the design of the evaluation tool. This was supported by Delpo (2005) and Morgan (2006) in two human resource related texts, where both supported the idea of having people at all levels involved in creating the job descriptions, and subsequent evaluation tool.

From the perspective of the author of this study, the literature review alone illustrates the need for a valid and objective performance evaluation process. Furthermore, the results of the internal survey illustrated the need to modify and restructure the existing evaluation tool that is in use by MTFEMS due to its inability to effectively evaluate the employees on a consistent and objective basis, mainly due to the fact that it is not tied to the job descriptions that exist, nor is the criteria considered to be objective in nature. Additionally, those tasked with evaluating others feel that they have not received sufficient training, nor have they had the opportunity to use the evaluation tool routinely to be considered "proficient" or even efficient. The results of the external survey also illustrated that many other people in the fire and EMS industry do not feel that their evaluation tool adequately measures the needs of their organization, but that many feel that it provides a fair appraisal of the individual employee. From the external survey results, some of the data collected will be useful to the re-creation of the MTFEMS evaluation tool. The results of both surveys were not necessarily surprising, but did illustrate how important it is to gain the input of various stakeholders in the process of creating a fair evaluation process. Additionally, the results supported the need for continual training on, and use of the evaluation tool.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The literature that was reviewed and the data that was collected support the need for MTFEMS to have a performance evaluation system in place, but more specifically, the need to update that system to reflect the current operations of the department. The updated process should be objective in nature and involve the use of criteria that should be derived from the current job descriptions that are in place. Conversely, a certain amount of subjective criteria should be allowed to be incorporated into the performance review process to assist with it being considered "well rounded" and able to measure the employee as a whole. As the new evaluation system is constructed, input should be sought from all levels of the organization, but the officers that will be conducting the actual process should have an extensive amount of input and feedback throughout the creation process. At some point in the initial stages of the process, help from outside of the organization might be beneficial and could be done through consultation with trained human resource professionals and those who are familiar with performance evaluation processes for public safety agencies. Some of the input from the external survey should be reviewed internally and incorporated into the revised grading scale, specifically the use of a grading scale combined with text or comment fields where feedback can be exchanged between the reviewer and the recipient. The text or comment fields would assist with the explanation of the reviewer as they attempt to tie objective or subjective criteria together for the employee.

Information obtained in this study supports the need to train all members of the department on the new performance evaluation process so that everyone is aware of the evaluation method and the grading scale that will be used. Additional training should be done with the officers that will be performing the evaluation process to ensure that they are aware of the importance of their role. In the design of the initial training that will go into this program,

consideration should also be given to some form of continuing education that everyone would receive at some point after the initial evaluations have been completed and distributed. This education would serve to help close the loop for the individuals that have received their evaluation, as well as for those that have administered them. Continual training should be a required component of the revised evaluation process, but should not be designed to be too frequent to be considered cumbersome as this would create animosity towards the process, or a sense that too much time is being spent solely on evaluations.

Currently, it is known that MTFEMS has purchased a performance tracking computer software program called Guardian Tracking. This software is designed to assist with tracking the behaviors and actions of personnel throughout the year, and is tailored to the department's needs by being constructed around the currently existing Operating Procedures manual. This program should be incorporated into the performance evaluation process extensively, so that information that is collected about an individual can be extracted or reviewed at any time, but mainly during the creation of an actual evaluation document. Training on this system would be required as well and would need to be adequate to make the program's use beneficial to the overall evaluation process.

A final recommendation would be to continually evaluate the function, adequacy, and relevancy of the revised performance evaluation process. Care should be taken to revise portions of the evaluation process as operating procedures are modified so that the criteria that are used to measure the employee against are updated continually to match operational changes. Any updates to the evaluation process should be communicated effectively throughout the department and a log should be created to trace the changes, and for ease of reference.

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APPENDIX 1 – INTERNAL MTFEMS SURVEY TOOL

1. Do you feel that the current performance evaluation method adequately meets the needs of the department?
   a. Yes, it meets our needs.
   b. No, it does not meet our needs.
   c. Other - Explanation (comment box)

2. Do you feel that the current performance evaluation method provides a fair assessment of the individual employee?
   a. Yes, it provides a fair assessment.
   b. No, it does not provide a fair assessment
   c. Other – Explanation (comment box)

3. When was the last time that you personally conducted a performance evaluation of an employee, as the lead reviewer?
   a. Within the last six months to one year
   b. One year to three years ago
   c. Three years to five years ago
   d. Greater than five years
   e. Never

4. When was the last time that you provided feedback on an employee's review, even if you did not deliver it to them directly?
   a. Within the last six months to one year
   b. One year to three years ago
   c. Three years to five years ago
   d. Greater than five years
   e. Never

5. Which members of this department should receive annual performance evaluations?
   a. All Members
   b. Full-time only, but not officers
   c. Full-time only, including officers
   d. Part-time and Volunteer only
   e. Other - Please list any exceptions or explanations for your answer (comment box)

6. Do you believe that the current performance evaluation process is adequately tied to the job descriptions for the various positions within the department?
   a. Yes
   b. No
   c. Comment box for any explanation or reasoning, if the respondent chooses to submit

7. Which ranks do you feel should conduct the performance evaluations in our department? Please mark all that apply.
   a. Lieutenants
   b. Captains
   c. Battalion or Division Chiefs
   d. Assistant Chiefs
   e. Chief
   f. Other – comment box

8. Do you believe that the people who conduct the performance evaluations receive the proper training on how to conduct the process?
   a. Yes
   b. No
   c. Yes, but only initially; there is no continual education or training
   d. Other – comment box

9. Do you feel that the comments and feedback that are provided by the reviewer are meaningful to the individual employee?
   a. Yes
   b. No
   c. Other - comment box

10. Do you feel that the current performance evaluation provides the individual employee with the opportunity to receive a "performance improvement plan" or structured support to assist them with achieving a higher score at their next evaluation?
    a. Yes
    b. No
    c. Other – comment Box

APPENDIX – INTERNAL MTFEMS SURVEY RESULTS

1. Do you feel that the current performance evaluation method adequately needs the needs of the department?	Yes = 3 No = 5
2. Do you feel that the current performance evaluation method provides a fair assessment of the individual employee?	Yes = 3 No = 5
3. When was the last time that you personally conducted a performance evaluation of an employee, as the lead reviewer?	Never = 1 6 mths- to 1 yr = 3 1-3 yrs = 2 3-5 yrs = 1 >5 yrs = 1
4. When was the last time that you provided feedback on an employee's review, even if you did not deliver it to them directly?	Never = 1 6 mths- to 1 yr = 5 1-3 yrs = 1 3-5 yrs = 0 >5 yrs = 1
5. Which members of this department should receive annual performance evaluations?	All = 7 FT only inc officers = 1
6. Do you believe that the current performance evaluation process is adequately tied to the job descriptions for the various positions within the department?	Yes = 3 No = 5
7. Which ranks do you feel should conduct the performance evaluations in our department? Please mark all that apply.	All = 1 Lt/Capt/AC/C = 4 Lt/Capt/DC/AC/C = 2 Lt/Capt = 1
8. Do you believe that the people who conduct the performance evaluations receive the proper training on how to conduct the process?	Yes = 1 No = 7
9. Do you feel that the comments and feedback that are provided by the reviewer are meaningful to the individual employee?	Yes = 3 No = 2 Depends = 2
10. Do you feel that the current performance evaluation provides the individual employee with the opportunity to receive a "performance improvement plan" or structured support to assist them with achieving a higher score at their next evaluation?	Yes = 4 No = 4
11. Do you feel that the current performance review or evaluation tool provides a fair assessment of the employee?	Yes = 2 No = 4 Depends = 2

APPENDIX 3 – EXTERNAL SURVEY TOOL

1. Does your department currently conduct annual performance reviews or evaluations for its personnel?
   a. Yes
   b. No - If the answer is "no", please explain why this process is not currently used in your department (comment box) – if "no", respondent skips to the end of the survey

2. If your department performs annual performance reviews or evaluations, which members of the department get them?
   a. All Members
   b. Full-time only, but not officers
   c. Full-time only, including officers
   d. Full-time and some part-time/volunteer
   e. Part-time only
   f. Other - Please list any exceptions or explanations for your answer (comment box)

3. Is the performance review or evaluation tool tied directly to the job descriptions for the various positions within the department?
   a. Yes
   b. No
   c. Comment box for any explanation or reasoning, if the respondent chooses to submit

4. Is the current performance review or evaluation tool made up of: - check all that apply
   a. A numeric grading scale
   b. A letter grade
   c. Text fields where documentation is written in
   d. Combination of A & C
   e. Combination of B & C
   f. None of the above – Please explain your review or evaluation tool (comment box)

5. Who conducts the performance reviews or evaluations in your department? Please mark all that apply.
   a. Lieutenants
   b. Captains
   c. Battalion or Division Chiefs
   d. Deputy Chiefs
   e. Assistant Chiefs
   f. Chief
   g. Other – provide comment box

6. Do the people who conduct the performance reviews or evaluations receive periodic training on how to conduct the process?
   a. Yes
   b. No
   c. Yes, but only initial training
   d. Yes, they receive recurring training or updates on the process
   e. I don't know
   f. Other - Exceptions/Explanation (comment box)

7. Do the various members of your department that receive performance reviews or evaluations have the opportunity to fill out a "self evaluation" prior to receiving their final evaluation?
   a. Yes
   b. No
   c. I don't know
   d. Other - Exception/Explanation (comment box)

8. Does the performance review or evaluation provide the employee with the opportunity to receive a "performance improvement plan" or structured support to assist them with achieving a higher score at their next evaluation?
   a. Yes, they receive feedback, but no formal plan
   b. Yes, they receive feedback and a formal improvement plan
   c. No, they do not receive feedback or a formal plan, only their score or grade
   d. I don't know

9. Does the employee have a chance to attach comments to their review or evaluation?
   a. Yes, they can write any comments about any portion of the review
   b. No, they cannot provide any written comments, but they can discuss their review or evaluation with their supervisor.
   c. No, they cannot provide any written comments about the review or evaluation.
   d. Other - Explanation (comment box)

10. Do you feel that the current performance review or evaluation tool adequately meets the needs of the department?
    a. Yes
    b. No
    c. Other - Explanation (comment box)

11. Do you feel that the current performance review or evaluation tool provides a fair assessment of the employee?
    a. Yes
    b. No
    c. Other – Explanation (comment box)

APPENDIX 4 – EXTERNAL SURVEY RESULTS

1. Does your department currently conduct annual performance reviews or evaluations for its personnel?		Yes = 86 No = 8
2. If your department performs annual performance reviews or evaluations, which members of the department get them?		All Emp = 76 FT only, including officers = 8 FT only, no offic = 2 Chief, Dep & Admin = 1 N/A or No = 7
3. Is the performance review or evaluation tool tied directly to the job descriptions for the various positions within the department?		Yes = 56 No = 28 No Answer = 5 Outlier = 5
4. Is the current performance review or evaluation tool made up of:		Combo A&C = 46 Combo B&C = 1 Text = 11 Number = 24 Letter = 1 N/A or None = 7 Outlier = 4
5. Who conducts the performance reviews or evaluations in your department? Please mark all that apply.		Lt = 65 Capt = 46 BC or DC = 16 AC = 54 Chief = 77 Other = 5 None = 3
6. Do the people who conduct the performance reviews or evaluations receive periodic training on how to conduct the process?		Yes = 17 No = 45 Initial Only = 19 Updates = 0 Didn't Know = 6

7. Do the various members of your department that receive performance reviews or evaluations have the opportunity to fill out a "self evaluation" prior to receiving their final evaluation?		Yes = 34 No = 52 Don't Know = 3 No Answer = 4
8. Does the performance review or evaluation provide the employee with the opportunity to receive a "performance improvement plan" or structured support to assist them with achieving a higher score at their next evaluation?		Yes, but no plan = 52 Yes = 23 No = 13 Don't Know = 6
9. Does the employee have a chance to attach comments to their review or evaluation?		Yes = 75 No, but review = 10 No = 3 No Answer = 5 Other = 1
10. Do you feel that the current performance review or evaluation tool adequately meets the needs of the department?		Yes = 36 No = 53 No Answer = 3 Other = 2
11. Do you feel that the current performance review or evaluation tool provides a fair assessment of the employee?		Yes = 50 No = 33 No Answer = 2 Other = 7 N/A = 2