# Should Concord Township Fire Department Implement a Performance Evaluation Process?

**Ohio Fire Executive Program Class #3**

By: Ronald R. Terriaco
Captain
Concord Township Fire Department
Concord Township, Ohio

A research project submitted to the Ohio Fire Executive Program

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## CERTIFICATION STATEMENT

I hereby certify that the following statements are true:

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

2. I have affirmed the use of proper spelling and grammar in this document by using the spell and grammar check functions of a word processing software program and correcting the errors as suggested by the program.

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## ABSTRACT

A problem that was identified with Concord Township Fire Department was the current lack of a performance evaluation system to evaluate the Concord Township Firefighters. The purpose of this research project was to evaluate whether the Concord Township Fire Department should implement a performance evaluation process.

This research project answered the following questions:

1. What purpose would a performance evaluation serve in Concord Township Fire Department?
2. What styles of performance evaluations are available?
3. Would the employer be liable if an evaluation is done incorrectly when promotions or terminations are involved?
4. What are alternate ways to provide positive and negative feedback for career growth for employees in Concord Township Fire Department?
5. How and why should supervisors be trained and educated in performance evaluations?

This research project looked at historical data from past performance evaluations that were used and how they affected the personnel of the Concord Township Fire Department. Descriptive research developed a survey that was given to all full-time firefighters, part-time firefighters and officers of the Concord Township Fire Department only. This survey was completed and it was determined that some form of a performance evaluation is wanted and needed to help with the career growth of the personnel. A literature review was conducted using

local and college libraries. An interview was conducted with the Concord Township Administrator who has over twenty years of human resource management background.

The results of this project clearly indicate that Concord Township Fire Department and its employees will benefit from some form of a performance evaluation system or another form of career growth evaluation that outlines improved communications, job descriptions, and the visions and mission of the Concord Township Fire Department.

The recommendation is to form a committee by selecting a combination of full-time firefighters, part-time firefighters, full-time officers, and part-time officers within the Concord Township Fire Department to review this research project and develop an action plan to implement a formal evaluation system.

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# INTRODUCTION

## Statement of the Problem

There are many issues that face the fire service today. In the Concord Township Fire Department there is currently a lack of performance evaluations for the personnel. The problem this study will address is should Concord Township Fire Department implement a performance evaluation system. Prior to 1995, Concord Township Fire Department used a semi-formal evaluation system. There was no reward for positive appraisals. An officer evaluated the firefighter and the paperwork went into that person's personal file. No feedback was documented or used for the betterment of the career of the individual. Since 1995 there has been no formal evaluation system, except for evaluations of the Fire Chief, Executive Captain and the Administrative Assistant.

The Concord Township Fire Department has had significant personnel turnover during the last ten years. The result is a department with over thirty-nine firefighters with less than ten years of Concord Township Fire Department experience. Organizations and personnel both need goals to help guide and grade for positive growth. To help meet these goals there should be positive and negative feedback for the employee's actions.

## Purpose of this Study

The purpose of this study is to identify a performance evaluation system that should be implemented by Concord Township Fire Department. The performance evaluation system would need to benefit the personnel and the administration of Concord Township Fire Department as a whole. The performance evaluation system would clearly define the goals created by the employee and the employee would also have an understanding of the vision of the

Concord Township Fire Department. If there is no performance evaluation system put in place then an alternative form of employee performance should be found and used. Communications between the employee and employer is vital for personal growth and department growth.

## Research Questions

The project was researched using descriptive and evaluative research methodologies. Evaluative research was used to show how past evaluations were done and issues that arose from it. Descriptive research was used to create a survey, which will gather information only from Concord Township Fire Department personnel.

*The research questions this study investigated are:*

1. What purpose would a performance evaluation serve in Concord Township Fire Department?
2. What styles of performance evaluations are available?
3. Would the employer be liable if an evaluation is done incorrectly when promotions or terminations are involved?
4. What are alternate ways to provide positive and negative feedback for career growth for the employees in Concord Township Fire Department?
5. How and why should supervisors be trained and educated in performance evaluations?

## BACKGROUND AND SIGNIFICANCE

Concord Township Fire Department was established fifty-five years ago as a small volunteer fire department. Its purpose was to extinguish the field fires from within this small farm community. It started with four farmers from the community who joined together, purchased an old pick-up truck and created a grassfire unit. The budget at that time was around three hundred dollars a year.

Today, Concord Township Fire Department is operated on a $1.9 million dollar budget that supports forty-five part-time firefighters and fourteen full-time firefighters. Included in this count are the Fire Chief and Executive Captain. There are eleven fire and rescue vehicles within the fleet. This includes the Fire Chief's vehicle and a Fire Prevention Bureau vehicle, shift officer car, emergency medical service chase vehicle, three advance life support medical squads, two advance life support engines, a water tanker and a reserve engine. The department covers twenty-four square miles of a semi-rural community, with a population of 17,500 residents. Concord Township is a bedroom community with some light commercial, research/development, and industrial business. The community is ranked as an Insurance Services Office (ISO) Class 4.

The community has grown very rapidly over the last decade with very upscale homes and property. This type of population has put a strain on the services provided to them with the small amount of staffing on duty. A new hospital is scheduled be built within the community with a start date of summer 2005.

Between 1985 and 1994 the fire administration used a performance evaluation comprised of twelve questions. The scale started with the number one and ended with the number five, with number three being average. Number one was poor and the number five was above average. An officer who had no training in performance evaluations graded each firefighter. Some officers

never saw or worked with the firefighter until the evaluation took place. The forms were filled out and reviewed with the firefighter in private. The officer discussed the grading and why he assigned the ranking. There was no real feedback given or received during the process. If the officer did not work with the individual, typically all marks of three were given. No goals were set for the firefighter to work towards. The paperwork was then filed in the personnel file. Prior to 1985 there is no documentation of any performance evaluations.

At this time there is no performance evaluation system in place for Concord Township Fire Department. There is an open door policy with the Fire Chief and Officers, but there is no real form of positive or negative feedback for either side. There is no way to follow or track any issues with the firefighter during or after probation. There is only written testing procedures when moving from one rank to another.

The potential impact this study will have on the Concord Township Fire Department is that it will provide information for the department to use in deciding whatever style it should implement as a performance evaluation system. Currently there is no way to gauge the progress of the firefighters career. History shows when there is no guidance for an employee it can result in poor performance of the employee. The guidance has to come from the employer so the employee will know what is expected of them.

A performance evaluation system, if used correctly, could improve moral because it would give the firefighter a chance to set their goals for the year and buy into the vision and mission of the department. The firefighter would have a say in their career path within the department. The firefighter would be able to recognize their downfall in a positive way and be able to correct it without being disciplined. The firefighter would have an opportunity for feedback and know what direction to work towards to complete their goal. Moreover, the

firefighter could buy into the department knowing that they would have a reward for their efforts. Both the firefighter and the administration would be winners if the evaluation were done correctly and consistently.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

There was significant information available specific to performance evaluations from the private business sectors. The literature came from the database of a local library, articles in journals, textbooks from business leaders and interviews with public officials and private business leaders. This literature review and personal interview will attempt to answer the questions presented in this research project in the following order.

A personal interview was conducted as part of this literature review. Concord Township Administrator Jack Blackwell was interviewed on August 13, 2003. The interview was conducted in his office in the Concord Township Town Hall and lasted about sixty minutes.

Mr. Blackwell is the Administrator for Concord Township and has been in this position for ten months. His background includes a Bachelors Degree in Social Service and twenty-two years as a human resource director. Mr. Blackwell acknowledges that performance evaluations are essential in the work place. The need to guide and document the employees' career growth is an important function of a manager. When using performance evaluations Mr. Blackwell prefers to use a goal-oriented style. It would show if the employee did meet expectations or exceeds expectations of the goal set for the year.

The evaluation needs to fit the position. Department Heads would be rated on leadership and management, planning, organization, and communications. Administrative staff would be rated on self-management, management of work and customer satisfaction. Hourly service

employees would be rated on a standards scale such as punctuality, appearance, and a team player. Each position has their own evaluation form to follow.

"The most important section on the evaluation form is the feedback section," Mr. Blackwell said. "Each employee needs to be able to communicate with the evaluator and the evaluator must be able to communicate with the employee. Most of the evaluation process is the evaluator listening."

Mr. Blackwell likes to have evaluations done annually, but sometimes employees need to be checked half way through the year. Mr. Blackwell uses a self-evaluation a few days before the actual performance evaluation is conducted. Each employee rates himself or herself before the evaluator does their evaluation and then they reach a mutual evaluation. Each evaluator has to have training in performance evaluations. All evaluators need to be grading employees equally. You have to rate the performance of the employee, not the personality of the employee. Mr. Blackwell stated at this time only the office staff; service department and department heads are evaluated.

**Research Question #1: What purpose or purposes could a performance evaluation serve in the Concord Township Fire Department?**

"There are four reasons for appraisal performance. First, appraisals provide information upon which promotion and salary decisions are made. Second, they provide an opportunity for you and your subordinate to review the subordinate's work related behavior. Third, the appraisal is part of the firm's career-planning process, because it provides an opportunity to review the person's career plans in light of his or her exhibited strengths or weaknesses. Fourth, they will help better manage and improve your organization's performance." Dessler, (2000), (p. 322).

The Concord Township Fire Department, except for department heads, is the only department in the Concord Township Campus that does not perform evaluations of its employees. All other Township employees receive some type of merit raise after a positive annual performance evaluation. The merit raise is added to their salary for the following year. The reward of the fire department evaluation will have to be based on what the Fire Chief and Concord Township Trustees agree to. The Fire Chief is not ready to negotiate merit raises into the full-time firefighter contract. The part-time firefighters are not committed to any contract. The Fire Chief and Trustees set the part-time firefighters salaries annually. Therefore, the purpose of performance evaluations for full-time firefighters and part-time firefighters at this time would be for promotional testing only.

The most useful purpose of performance evaluations would be the communication aspect between the Fire Chief, Fire Officers and Firefighters. Each firefighter would have a chance to become involved and aware of the mission of the Concord Township Fire Department, set their own career paths and motivation, and have the benefit of feedback from their Officer.

Other sources of information were gathered to narrow down the purpose of performance evaluations in Concord Township Fire Department. "Goals and standards are not just criteria for making judgments; they are also incentives for an employee to succeed. Most successful appraisal interviews occur when the employee does 90% of the talking and the appraiser does 10%." Jenks, (1992) (p. 119).

In "Performance Evaluations As A Motivational Tool", (Beard, 2000) Beard states that "what a person gets as a salary increase or bonus is important, a manager ought not add greater emphasis to it. The focus should be on the job making certain you as a leader are attentive to your subordinates' psychological needs concerning work. There also needs to be time for the

employee to have input on his personal goals for the coming year and keep critical feedback in balance. Do not point out too many deficiencies at a time. This can break a workers spirit."

**Research Question #2: What styles of performance evaluations are available?**

Many styles of performance evaluations are accessible to use. It is a matter of using one that will work for your organization. The performance evaluation system will need to produce positive results for the organization and for the employees. Whatever style is chosen it must be used correctly to reach the maximum benefits offered.

Many companies today utilize a system known as an appraisal evaluation. Whatever the system is called it must have the following guidelines according to "The Hiring, Firing Personnel Forms Book", Jenks (1992) (p.113): the criteria against which you judge an employee must be clearly related to the demands of the job and judge the work not the person, eliminate the uneven standards that can vary from manager to manager, remove temptation to judge the employee by personalities, motivate employees with appraisals, and create the most productive work force.

Performance measures need to be based on best practices using local procedures and locally defined performance objectives developed from each position's job description. Measurements might be based on the quantity of work to be performed within a given time period, the quality of work, the timeliness of work performed or a combination of these, "Staff Performance Goals", (Cochenour, 2000).

In "Performance Appraisals: The Importance of Documentation", (Crawford, 2003) Crawford states that some of the appraisal models deal with critical incidents and a clear pattern for storing or recording such information. The use of critical incident when evaluating a firefighter or officer constitutes the difference in whether he is doing his job effectively or ineffectively. With the critical incident method, the supervisor keeps a log of desirable or

undesirable examples or incidents of each subordinate's work related behavior. Every six months or so, the supervisor and the subordinate meet and discuss the performance of the examples or incidents documented. (Dessler, 2000).

There are four commonly shared factors used in performance evaluations within the fire service and other organizations: documentation, comparison of two individuals, system maintenance, and comparison of ones individual's skills (Crawford, 2003).

The graphic rating scale is the simplest and most popular technique for appraisal performance. It lists traits and a range of performance values for each trait. The supervisor rates each subordinate by circling the score that best describes his or her performance for each trait. Then the values are totaled for a score (Dessler, 2000).

"The alternation ranking method is a ranking system that ranks employees from best to worst on a trait or traits. It is usually easier to distinguish between the worst and best employees than to just rank them." Dessler, (2000) (p. 325).

"The paired comparison method helps make the ranking method more precise. For every trait (quantity of work, quality of work, and etc), every subordinate is paired with and compared to every other subordinate and the forced distribution method is similar to grading a curve. With this method, predetermined percentages of rates are placed in performance categories." Dessler, (2000) (p.327).

Computerized performance appraisals and electronic performance monitoring are a new idea to help employees check their own performance. It allows the employee to monitor their own performance at work and it enables the employer to electronically monitor the employee, such as amount of computer work being performed and other activities. (Dessler, 2000).

If it has been a long time since the appraisal system was overhauled, then it is time. There are four phases to follow when conducting this overhaul. Phase one-Performance Planning, the manager gets together with each employee and talks about what (goals, objectives, and results) and the how (values, competencies, and behaviors). Phase two-Execution, the employees do the jobs discussed in phase one. Phase three-Performance Assessment, this asks employees to list what they're proud of: work accomplishments, skills acquired and so on. Phase four-Performance Appraisal, this is done at the end of the year and segues back into phase one-performance planning. This is according to "Performance Evaluations: Is It Time For A Makeover," (Grote, 2000).

**Research Question #3: Would the employer be liable if an evaluation is done incorrectly when promotions or terminations are involved?**

Information that was gathered found that when organizations did not use the performance evaluation correctly they would be held liable in the courts. An example shows that when an evaluation was given, ratings were high and the appraisal documentation had no indication of poor work. When this employee was terminated because of poor work and the lawyers found the documentation and the organization was held liable for a wrongful termination of the employee. If you write it down, then it is a legal document and it will be used against you if allowed.

Another illustrative case covered layoff decisions. A court ruled that a company had violated the law when the company laid off several Hispanic-surnamed employees on the basis of poor performance ratings. The court concluded that the practice was illegal because: 1) the appraisals were bases on subjective supervisory observations, 2) the appraisals were not administered and scored in a standardized fashion, 3) two of the three supervisory evaluators did not have daily contact with the employees being evaluated, according to (Dessler, 2000).

However, subjectivity and inadequate standardization are not only potential Equal Employment Opportunities (EEO)-type problems. To the extent that a supervisor unreasonably rates everyone toward the high or low, allows for halo effect, exhibits personal bias, or relies solely on more recent events, courts have and will view the appraisal and subsequent personnel decision as indefensible.

Guidelines for developing a legally defensible appraisal process includes the following: 1) conduct a job analysis to ascertain the criteria and standards required for successful job performance, 2) incorporate these criteria and standards into a rating system, 3) use clearly defined individual dimensions of job performance, 4) communicate performance standards to employees and those who are rating them, 5) when using graphic rating scales, avoid abstract trait names such as loyalty & honesty, 6) employ subjective supervisory ratings as only one component of the overall appraisal process, 7) train supervisors to use the rating instrument properly, 8) allow appraisers substantial daily contact with the employee being evaluated, 9) base appraisals on separate evaluations of each job's performance dimensions, 10) whenever possible, use more than one appraiser, 11) one appraiser should never have absolute authority to determine a personnel action, 12) include an employee appeal process, 13) document all information and reasons bearing on any personnel decisions, and 14) when appropriate, provide corrective guidance to assist poor performers in improving their performance. Dessler, (2000) (p. 342).

In "Giving and Receiving Performance Evaluations", (Koziel, 2000) Koziel mentions that performance evaluations can be stressful and confrontational, but they need to be done. A successful performance evaluation system benefits both employer and employee. The evaluation should be a dialog over whether specific goals have been met. Initially team members will need

assistance setting realistic goals, (Koziel, 2000). "Giving performance evaluations you strive for consistency, give praise where it is due and turn the negatives into positives. When receiving performance evaluations, you need to be prepared, communicate, and focus on the future." (Koziel, 2000).

Some of the research literature directs us towards not using a performance evaluation. In "Employee Evaluations", (Urban, 1996) "the problem with evaluations, if they are not done properly, is that they will contradict a supervisor's point of view. If you don't do performance evaluations right, don't do them, period. Supervisors don't like to say negative things about employees." (Giotto, 1996) says, "It's not motivation. It's hard to do. The supervisors usually overrate everyone." Unless you really train supervisors and oversee the system the evaluations tend to not be a useful tool," McTiernan says. He also says "It is better not to do them at all than to do them improperly."

"One reason some organizations, including fire departments, fail in their performance appraisal programs is that they often select evaluation criteria indiscriminately, evaluate on personality, and are very poor record keepers." Crawford, (2003) (p. 100).

The types of lawsuits resulting from performance evaluations are many and varied. For example, slander and libel suits may result from untrue statements made in a performance evaluation that are conveyed to third parties, such as co-workers or individuals in the community, according to (Zachary, 2000). What is in the evaluation is to be factual. In a nutshell, Zachary states "that (1) performance evaluations can lead to lawsuits, (2) liability can result both from overly positive evaluations and from overly negative, (3) make sure any factual statements made are true, (4) supervisors should take notes throughout the evaluation, (5) the most liability results from evidence of a pattern of performance evaluation that adversely affects

those in a protected class and from evidence of intentional wrong doing with respect to performance evaluations."

The most common topic in the review is that the performance evaluations or appraisal reviews need to be objective and goal oriented and that training be provided for all managers who conduct performance evaluations. The system needs to be evaluated periodically and adjusted if need be. Proper documentation and factual words must be used to keep from a lawsuit. If the system is not going to be used correctly and consistently it should not be used at all.

**Research Question #4: What are alternate ways to provide positive and negative feedback for career growth for the employees in Concord Township Fire Department?**

If no formal performance evaluation system is chosen by the organization then it is possible to use alternative methods to promote communications and career paths for the employees of your organization.

In "Two Thumbs Down for Yearly Performance Evaluations", (Dauten, 1995) says "If bosses aren't giving their employees regular feedback, why are they bosses? If your supervisor has employees making mistakes, do they wait and speak to them at a for-real performance review? Of course not, you call them in and correct the problem. Is this hard stuff?" asked Cantoni, (2001).

In "Performance Evaluation: A Deadly Disease" (Aluri & Reichel, 1994), "alternative ways to performance evaluations are: educate managers in leadership principles and their obligations, select employees more carefully, once selected provide better education and training to employees." A leader should be a colleague – willing to learn from and with his or her employees, and be a leader not a judge. A leader should use statistical principles to categorize

employees into three groups, such as (1) those that belong to the system, (2) those that fall on the outside of the system on the good side, (3) those that fall on the outside of the system on the poor side. Develop an equitable formula to distribute pay raises among the employees. Hold long interviews with every employee to develop better understanding among managers and employees. Use performance data to improve the system as a whole but not to rank people that fall within the system.

**Research Question #5: How and why should supervisors be trained and educated in performance evaluations?**

It is proven that supervisors need to be trained in performance evaluations in order for evaluations to work, not only for the employee, but the employer as well. A complete understanding of the evaluation system used, job description of the employees, benefits of a good annual performance evaluation, and why it is used is needed between both employer and employee.

In "Perfecting Performance Appraisals" (McBey, 1994), McBey says, "companies that hope to succeed in today's competitive business environment must learn to identify their most capable employee for placement in key organizational appointments." To do this, managers should devote more attention to maximizing the effectiveness of performance evaluations. "Moreover, managers need to be trained, avoid errors, select the best system, watch for special cases, and produce results." (McBey, 1994).

Training in appraisals or performance evaluations will help managers use uniform methods of appraisals. Training reduces biases, promotes accuracy and stimulates participation in the system (Jenks, 1992).

In “Managing People”, (Adams, 1997) Adams recommends that you know the job description of the employee. To make performance reviews work, you’ve got to have a true two-way dialog and understand that performance reviews can be one of the most positive and proactive tools a manager has to communicate with employees.

Inexperienced and untrained evaluators lead to errors. In the fire service, an inexperienced evaluator is usually a result of personnel simply not receiving the proper training for assessing the criteria in an appraisal (Crawford, 2003).

(Dessler, 2000) states “that some supervisors, because of insufficient training, can cause more harm in ranking employees.” This can happen when a supervisor’s rating of a subordinate on one trait biases the rating of that person on other traits and this is called a halo effect. Central tendency is when a supervisor rates everyone with an average rating and strictness/leniency is when a supervisor rates all subordinates either high or low. Bias is the tendency to allow individual differences such as age, race, and sex affect the appraisal rates the employees receive. Continual training and re-evaluating the performance evaluation system will mitigate any discrepancies.

There are four ways to minimize appraisal problems. First, be sure to understand the problems just discussed and the suggestions given for each of them. Second, choose the right appraisal tool. Each tool, such as the graphic rating scale or critical incident method, has its own advantages and disadvantages. The third way is to train supervisors to eliminate rating errors such as halo, leniency, and central tendency. A fourth solution is keeping a diary.

## PROCEDURES

Information gathered for this research project was from human resource books obtained from a local college library, human resource books, and articles from a local library using their data base system. Descriptive research method was used as a survey tool to gather current data only from personnel within the Concord Township Fire Department to reduce frame error. A cover letter was attached to each survey distributed explaining the purpose of the survey. All department employees received a survey no matter what rank. Collected data is shown by the use of a bar graph and the survey consists of twelve closed ended questions. A personal interview from the Concord Township Administrator was performed for more information collection.

### Definition of Terms

Performance Appraisal: Evaluating an employee's current or past performance relative to his or her performance standards.

Bias: Tendency to allow individual differences such as age, race, and sex to affect the appraisal rates these employees receive.

Strictness/Leniency: Occurs when a supervisor has a tendency to rate all subordinates either high or low.

Central Tendency: A tendency to rate all employees the same way, such as rating them all average.

Unclear Performance Standards: An appraisal scale that is too open to interpretation.

Objective: Uninfluenced by emotions or personal prejudices & presented factually.

Subjective: Taking place within a person's mind-not looking at the outside forces.

Halo Effect: Occurs when a supervisor's rating of a subordinate on one trait biases the rating of that person on other traits.

## Limitations of Study

There was some limitation of information for this research project if you looked for information on performance evaluations under the heading of fire service. More research information was found under the business world heading.

# RESULTS

My results from this research project show there is a need for some type of performance evaluation system of employees. This performance evaluation system, whatever form, must be done at least annually, consistently by all employers and employees, fair & unbiased, and done legally.

All forms of performance evaluations need to be done once a year or maybe twice a year depending on the number of employees and goals set by both the employee and employer. Each supervisor must be trained in giving performance evaluations equally so the performance evaluation is given consistently to each employee.

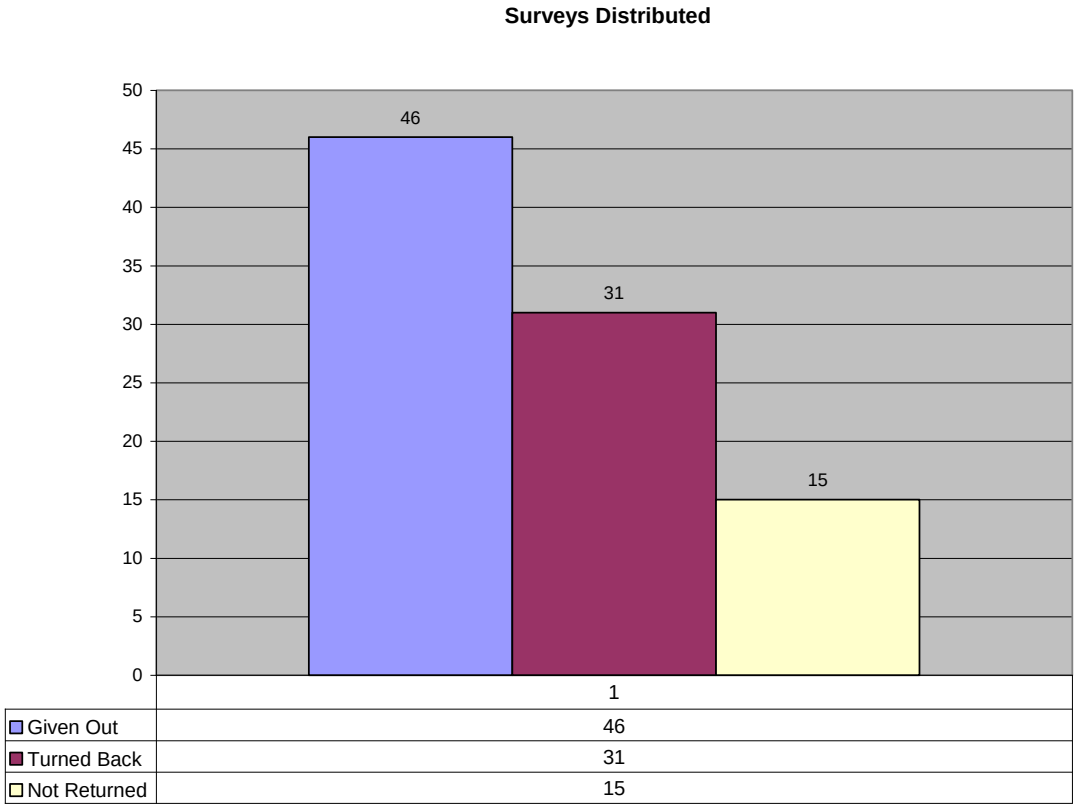
The performance of the employee needs to be rated, not the personality of the employee. When employers start evaluating employees on personality the system is falling short of its expectations of the employees.

Whatever style of performance evaluation is performed it has to be done legally and consistently. All performance evaluations are legal documentations and can be used against your organization if it is not used with the intent of providing career growth and a form of positive communication between the employee and the employer.

## Survey Results

The survey consisted of twelve closed ended questions given to only Concord Township Fire Department personnel. I did not want to see what other Fire Departments wanted for career guidance or a feedback medium. I wanted to see what our own Officers and Firefighters felt towards performance evaluations. The results show a strong acceptance of performance evaluations including performance competencies.

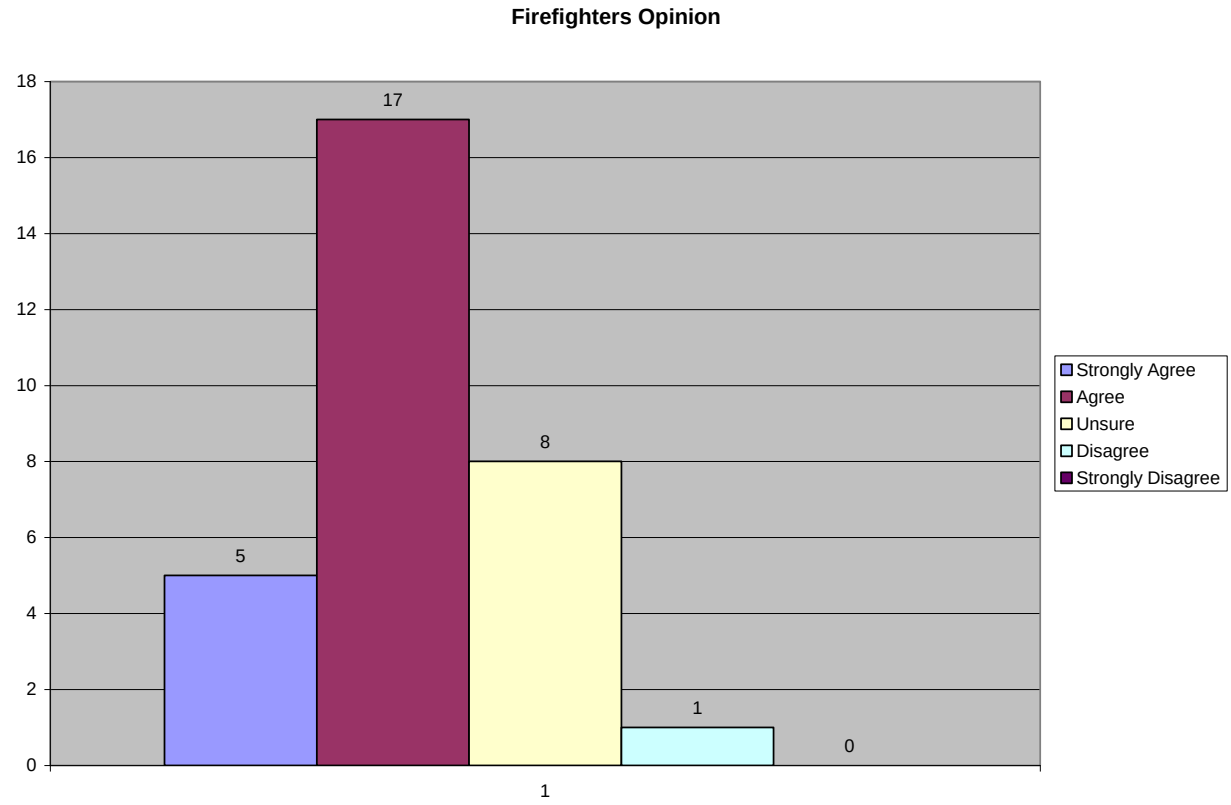
There were forty-six surveys given out to fire department members. Thirty-one completed surveys were returned. Out of the thirty-one surveys returned there was only one survey that was tainted, the answers to this specific survey were all marked to the lowest value. The remaining fifteen surveys not returned could not be confirmed if it was a specific group of fire department members who wanted to disrupt the project or if it was individuals just not completing the survey. See (Surveys Distributed Chart #1 below)



The results are as follows:

Question #1 “Do you think performance evaluations should be used in the fire service?”

Seventeen out of thirty-one firefighters agreed that performance evaluations should be used in the fire service while five firefighters strongly agreed. One firefighter disagreed with performance evaluations in the fire service and eight firefighters were unsure if evaluations should be used. See (Firefighters Opinion Chart #1 below)



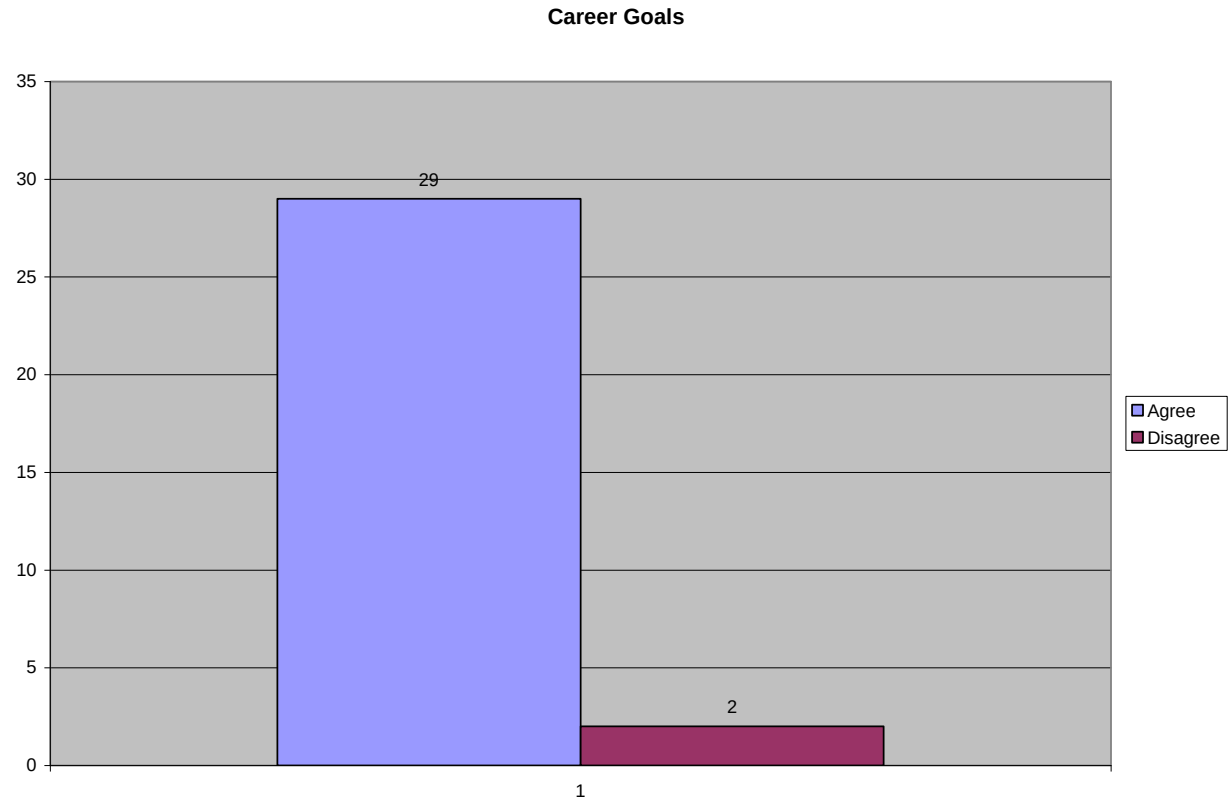

Question #2 “A performance evaluation should benefit the employee by providing him/her with positive feedback and be a positive experience for career growth?”

Seventeen out of thirty-one firefighters did agree with the question that evaluations should benefit the employee with feedback and be a positive growth experience. Eleven firefighters

strongly agreed to the positive feedback you get for career growth within the evaluation. One firefighter did disagree with this question while two firefighters were unsure.

Questions #3 “A performance evaluation should provide the employee with goals for his/her career planning and development?”

There are twenty-nine firefighters who do agree that performance evaluations should provide goals for planning their career and two firefighters disagreed. See (Career Goals Chart #1 below)



Question #4 “Should there be alternative ways to provide positive/negative feedback for career planning and development?”

Seventeen firefighters agreed to alternative ways for planning and development of their career while eight firefighters strongly agreed. One firefighter did disagree and five firefighters were unsure of alternative ways for career planning.

Question #5 “How often performance evaluations should be completed?”

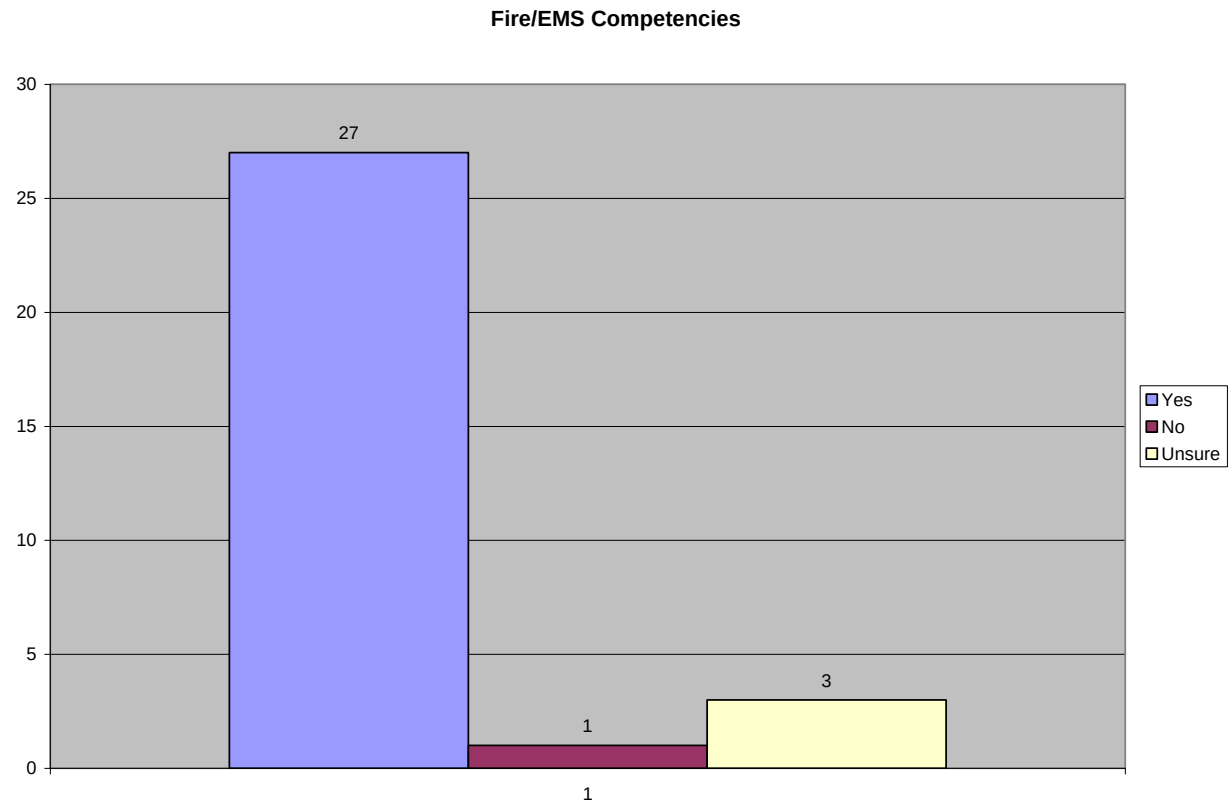
Every twelve months is what twenty-two firefighters agreed to have their performance evaluations completed. Eight firefighters agreed to every six months and one firefighter said every twenty-four months for completion of the evaluation.

Question #6 “Should the employee receive a self-evaluation for completion prior to the formal performance evaluation by their officer?”

There were fourteen firefighters who did agree to have a self-evaluation done before the formal evaluation by their officer. Six firefighters strongly agreed, eight firefighters were unsure and three firefighters disagreed.

Question #7 “Should both Fire and Emergency Medical Service (EMS) competencies be part of the performance evaluations?”

Twenty-seven firefighters said yes to Fire and EMS competencies as part of the evaluations, while three were unsure and one said no to the competencies. See (Fire/EMS Competencies Chart #1 below)



Question #8 “Would you agree that the performance evaluation process be completed by your peers?”

Four firefighters strongly agree, ten firefighters agree, seven firefighters are unsure, eight firefighters do disagree, and two firefighters strongly disagree with evaluations completed by their peers.

Question #9 “Would you agree that the performance evaluation process be completed by your officer?”

There were twenty firefighters who agreed with officers performing the evaluation. Six firefighters strongly agreed, three firefighters were unsure and two firefighters disagreed.

Question #10 “If a formal performance evaluation system were to be developed it should have input from the various ranks in the department.”

Twenty-seven firefighters agree that input should come from various ranks to develop a system while four firefighters disagreed.

Question #11 “Would you be willing to serve on a committee to develop a performance evaluation system for Concord Township Fire Department?”

Nineteen firefighters said yes and twelve firefighters said no to be on a committee to develop a system.

Question #12 “Would you use a performance evaluation to your advantage within your own career growth?”

Twenty-one firefighters said yes to using the evaluation to their advantage while two said no and eight firefighters were unsure.

The results of this survey did not turn out as anticipated. The expected results of the survey were that no performance evaluations would be wanted or any type of career growth was

needed within the Concord Township Fire Department. The results did show a strong desire to have performance evaluations within the Concord Township Fire Department. The members feel the performance evaluations will help with their career growth and have positive benefits.

## DISCUSSION

It is acknowledged that data collected from the literature review and the survey conducted that Concord Township Fire Department does need to implement a performance evaluation system. There are four reasons for performance evaluation. "First, appraisals provide information upon which promotion and salary decisions are made. Second, they provide an opportunity for you and your subordinate to review the subordinate's work related behavior. Third, the appraisal is part of the firm's career planning process, because it provides an opportunity to review the person's career plans in light of his or her exhibited strengths or weaknesses. Fourth, they will help better manage and improve your organization's performance," as stated (Dessler, 2000).

The most useful purpose would be the increase in communication between the Fire Chief, Officers and the Firefighters. Each Firefighter would have a chance to become involved and aware of the vision and mission of the fire department, set their own career paths and motivation, and have the benefit of feedback from their Officer.

Although there are many styles of performance evaluation systems to choose from, performance measures need to be based on best practices using local procedures and locally defined performance objectives developed from each positions job description. "Measurements might be based on the quantity of work performed within a given time period, the quality of work, the timeliness of the work performed or a combination of these," according to (Cochenour, 2000).

Performance evaluations are legal documents and need to be treated this way. If it is written down it becomes liable. However, subjectivity and inadequate standardization are not only optional EEO-type problems. To the extent that a supervisor unreasonably rates everyone

toward the high or low, allows for halo effect, exhibits personal bias, or relies solely on more recent events. Courts have and will view the appraisal and subsequent personnel decisions as indefensible.

If the department does not choose to implement a performance evaluation then another form of evaluation system needs to be formed. There has to be some form of communication between the Fire Chief, Fire Officers and the Firefighters. This communication will only improve the direction that the department is moving towards. "If bosses are not giving their employee's regular feedback, why are they bosses?" (Dauten, 1995).

All of the Fire Officers need to be trained in order to make the most of the appraisal system. Untrained supervisors will only add frustration to the system and make it fail. The system also has to be reviewed on a regular basis to keep it current with any new standards or strategic goals that have changed. Companies that hope to succeed in today's competitive business environment must learn to identify their most capable employee for placement in key organizational appointments states (McBey, 1994).

The Fire Chief, Fire Officers and the Firefighters need to be focused on the strategic goals of the Concord Township Fire Department to provide the highest quality customer service to the community that can be accomplished.

## RECCOMENDATIONS

After the literature review, personal interview and the department survey it is apparent that Concord Township Fire Department needs to implement a performance evaluation process.

If no performance evaluation process is implemented, then an alternative form of career guidance and communication needs to be established within the department. The study shows the first item to accomplish is to create a committee that will represent all ranks in the Concord Township Fire Department. This committee needs to establish an outline for direction using the information collected from this report. The study suggests that all types of performance evaluations be reviewed and choose one that will best fit the needs and desires of Concord Township Fire Department. The style chosen has to be user friendly and not so complicated that it will be put in a file drawer and not used.

The fire department administration has developed a strategic plan for the fire department and this plan should be useful in the development of a performance evaluation system. The Concord Township Trustees have to support any style of a performance evaluation system that would be implemented by the Concord Township Fire Department and they must be able to work with the Fire Chief for continued support of the program.

The survey recommended that Fire and EMS competencies should be part of the performance evaluation. The study recommends the Concord Township Fire Department Training Officer and Emergency Medical Service (EMS) Coordinator submit a list of Fire and EMS competencies that can be graded when the individual performs these tasks. The study also suggests these competencies change yearly so it stays current with new regulations from national standards.

The study strongly recommends all Officers of the Concord Township Fire Department accept training from a professional source of performance evaluations, and continue to receive this training on a timely rotation. Each Officer has a responsibility to their Firefighters. Each Officer needs to offer Firefighters the best advantage possible for career growth and communications. The performance evaluation system needs to be evaluated routinely.

At this time there are no rewards program within the Concord Township Fire Department other than recognition for duties performed above and beyond the call of duty. The committee will have to establish some form of reward for positive performances by the employee, and establish some type of action for employees not moving in a positive direction. Any type of recognition suggested will have to be strong enough to move the individual in the positive direction and boost their moral.

This study will suggest a committee be organized and begin meeting by August of 2005. The actual performance evaluation process should be ready to implement by April 2006.

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## APPENDIX 1 – SURVEY ON PERFORMANCE EVALUATION IN CONCORD TOWNSHIP FIRE DEPARTMENT

Please answer the following questions as accurately as possible. All data will be collected and tabulated. The statistics from this survey will be posted for your interest and information. Please put the survey in the envelope provided, seal it, and put into my mailbox. Thank you.

**Question 1 – Do you think performance evaluations should be used in the fire service?**

- ❑ 1. Strongly Agree
- ❑ 2. Agree
- ❑ 3. Unsure
- ❑ 4. Disagree
- ❑ 5. Strongly Disagree

**Question 2 – A performance evaluation should benefit the employee by providing him/her with positive feedback and be a positive experience for career growth.**

- ❑ 1. Strongly Agree
- ❑ 2. Agree
- ❑ 3. Unsure
- ❑ 4. Disagree
- ❑ 5. Strongly Disagree

**Question 3 – A performance evaluation should provide the employee with goals for his/her career planning and development.**

- ❑ 1. Agree
- ❑ 2. Disagree

**Question 4 – Should there be alternative ways to provide positive/negative feedback for career planning and development?**

- ❑ 1. Strongly Agree
- ❑ 2. Agree
- ❑ 3. Unsure
- ❑ 4. Disagree
- ❑ 5. Strongly Disagree

**Question 5 – How often should performance evaluations be completed?**

- ❑ 1. Every 6 months
- ❑ 2. Every 12 months
- ❑ 3. Every 24 months

**Question 6 – The employee should receive a self-evaluation for completion prior to the formal performance evaluation and review with their officer.**

- 1. Strongly Agree
- 2. Agree
- 3.Unsure
- 4. Disagree
- 5. Strongly Disagree

**Question 7 – Should both fire and ems competencies be part of the performance evaluations?**

- 1. Yes
- 2. No
- 3. Unsure

**Question 8 – Would you agree that the performance evaluation process be completed by your peers?**

- 1. Strongly Agree
- 2. Agree
- 3. Unsure
- 4. Disagree
- 5. Strongly Disagree

**Question 9 – Would you agree that the performance evaluation process be completed by your officer?**

- 1. Strongly Agree
- 2. Agree
- 3. Unsure
- 4. Disagree
- 5. Strongly Disagree

**Question 10 – If a formal performance evaluation system were to be developed it should have input from the various ranks in the department.**

- 1. Agree
- 2. Disagree

**Question 11 – Would you be willing to serve on a committee to develop a performance evaluation system for Concord Township Fire Department?**

- 1. Yes
- 2. No

**Question 12 – Would you use the performance evaluation to your benefit with career growth?**

- 1. Yes
- 2. No
- 3. Unsure

Figure Caption

Figure 1. *[Insert Figure 1 Caption Here]*