"While I appreciate your plain-spoken explanations, at $500 an hour, could you run it by me again in arcane legal jargon?"

Roadmap

- – What is Professional Development?

- – Why Consider a Formal Professional Development Program?

- – Developing the Right Culture

- – How to Implement Professional Development Program

The Absence of Professional Development

The Peter Principle

The Principle:

People in a hierarchy tend to rise to their personal "level of incompetence." In other words, an employee is promoted based on their success in previous jobs or positions until they reach a level at which they are no longer competent, i.e. their so called "*final placement.*"

Result: Given enough time, every position in the organization will be occupied by someone who can't do the job.

The Peter Principle

Advancement to Level of Incompetency– Why Does this Happen?

1. Who is willing to reject a promotion--and the benefits afforded, e.g. wage increase, more vacation, prestige, etc.--when the opportunity arises ?

2. Unlike more advanced positions, Entry-level jobs (e.g. FF) are generally technical and require defined set of skills that can be objectively measured.

3. Internal promotions (e.g. company officer or B.C.) are made when vacancies occur. These positions require different set of skills: management, organization, people skills and supervision, holding others accountable.

4. Promotions often based more on employee's performance in current role than the employees' level of preparedness for the next one.

The Peter Principle – Adverse Effects on an Organization

- Department-wide mediocrity

  – Nobody is able to do their job effectively

- Decreased enthusiasm and interest in the job.

  – Procrastination

  – avoidance

- Morale issues

- Interpersonal Conflicts

The Peter Principle – Effects on the Individual

- Can an Employee who reaches their "Ultimate Placement" be happy and content?

  - **Employee #1**: He realizes his true situation and is not happy.

    - He may equate incompetence with laziness.

    - Such an employee may work harder until burn out or health problems.

  - **Employee #2**: *Ignorance is bliss*.

    - This employee is satisfied by substituting irrelevant duties for the proper duties of their position

The Antidote to the Peter Principle

Preparing employees to excel in their current positions and to competently advance to higher levels of responsibility.

What do we mean by "Professional Development"?

Professional Development in a Nutshell

- "[A] **comprehensive** program designed to develop our next generation of leaders and offer firefighters and officers (at all ranks) developmental tools and a format to achieve **success and satisfaction** in their current role."

  – Sal Scarpa, *Developing Your Professional Development Program* (2015)

- In a word: "Holistic"

  – Requires a shared responsibility between the individual and the fire department.

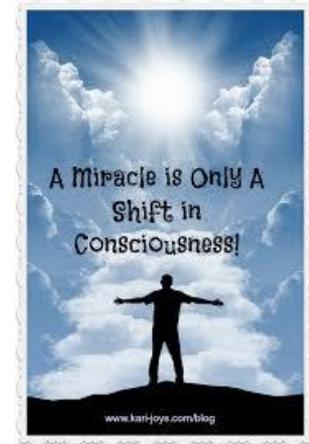# When Should Professional Development Begin?

Professional development <u>starts the day someone is hired</u>

and should <u>never stop</u>.

Professional Development Must Be Continuous

Sending Personnel to Workshops and Conferences is not a PDP

- Too often, organizations depend too heavily on sending employees to a seminar or workshop and calling it good!

  – Don't expect a miracle if this is the only strategy.

    - How much do you remember from a conference?

      – On average, 25%

      – Forget 1/2 -1/3 within 8 hours

    - No opportunity for on the job implementation

  – Progressive departments rely upon <u>continuous</u> education and experiential opportunities to help their employees develop

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How is Professional Development Holistic?

It is much more than "training."

Training is only one element of a formal, comprehensive Professional Development Program ("PDP"), which should include:

- ➢ formal education

- ➢ experience

- ➢ certification

- ➢ self-development

Mutual Obligations Essential to an Effective Program

❖ **Department** Obligations:

  ❖ Provide the appropriate *environment* and *opportunities.*

    ❖ Training, mentoring, class work, discussions

❖ **Personnel** Obligations:

  ❖ Display *motivation, passion* and a willingness to learn and be mentored by others. [hopefully the new hires already have these attributes]

  ❖ Deficits in motivation and passion can be corrected, but it will take time and effort.

Professional Development at the **Organizational Level**

Department Responsibility -- Ensure the well rounded, incremental maturity of your department's members:

- Provide opportunities….at a pace that members can absorb

  - Be deliberate and patient..this is not a "crash course"

- Provide the right environment

  - culture

- Continual investment in the departments members

- Allow for individual personalization

Professional Development Goals at the **Individual Level** – Three Phases

1. Develop proficiency and success at current level: knowledge, skills and ability.

    ❑ Firefighter – suppression, extrication, medical

    ❑ Company Officer – Situational awareness, size-up skills, reading smoke

    ❑ Chief Officer – Incident command; strategic, long term approach, oversight; accountable to elected officials; diplomat

2. Develop the right *mentality* for success at current level

3. Prepare for advancements

Why a *Formal* Professional Development Program?

Why a Formal PDP?

"Success is largely dependent upon the caliber of leadership of the individual fire chiefs, and there is no assurance that this progress will continue…when there is a change of leadership . . ."

"The career of the fire executive must be systematic and deliberate."

International Association of Fire Chiefs Officer Development Handbook

The "Informal" Program

Why a Formal PDP?

An ad hoc development program won't be ineffective:

– Expectations can't be articulated consistently by the organization

– Organizational support in the form of time and money is lacking and inconsistent.

  • Training becomes reactionary to address problems that emerge

– Only those who are intrinsically motivated rise to the top.

  • This can create conflicts with other employees who are inclined to do less.

Why a Formal PDP?

A **formal** PDP benefits a fire department in many ways:

- Fosters "active engagement" by personnel:

    - Personal responsibility increases.

    - Personnel are better able to self-identify gaps in their development and work towards improvement.

- Organizationally, the department's actions are designed to make "all" succeed.

Consequences of a Dysfunctional PDP

➢ Employees

- ➢ Fail to acquire skills and confidence necessary to be effective and satisfied at their new position.

➢ Senior employees

- ➢ unprepared to mentor younger employees effectively.

- ➢ They don't know how to do it.

Consequences of Dysfunctional Development

➢ Deficiencies are magnified at officer levels:

➢ time management.

➢ lack of diligence in completing assigned tasks or prioritizing

➢ Their relationships at all levels may suffer, along with credibility and authority.

A Formal PDP Results in Greater Employee Job Satisfaction

- Effective PDPs enhance the **Culture** of the Organization.

  - Boosts job satisfaction and pride in the organization

  - Retention and recruitment

    o Satisfied employees stay put

    o Alleviates job frustration/burnout

    o Makes organization appealing to recruits

    o Can attract high quality employees

The Myth About Employee Satisfaction

- Satisfaction comes not from "success" in advancement but, rather, by "positive thinking".

- Traditional recipe for job satisfaction:

  - Work hard >Job Advancement > Happier

- But: every time you're successful, your brain changes the goalposts of "success." If happiness is on the other side of success, your brain never gets there.

- Professional Development raises the level of *positivity* in the present, and the brain experiences "happiness advantage." The brain performs better at every level.

Other Benefits of a Formal Professional Development Program

- Enhances Agency's **Political Bank Account**

  ❑ Professionalism is readily apparent outside the Organization.

    ❑ Public impressed with excellent, professional service

  ❑ Public gives agency "benefit of the doubt" when it comes to levy and bond measures

In Summary, Professional Development Benefits All

- Individual
  - o Better skills, challenging job opportunities, greater personal satisfaction
- Organization
  - o More skilled and satisfied workforce to fulfill the mission
  - o Fewer HR issues
- Community served
  - o Better service, more responsive-scope of response capacity, and more efficient and effective response

Succession Planning

PDP Is a Planning Tool For the Future

- Organizations use Professional Development to **strengthen their organization** over time to **meet current demands and adapt to future demands-** anticipated and unanticipated

  - Effective succession planning requires a PDP

Succession Planning and Professional Development are Inextricably Linked

What is Succession Planning?

The <u>right person</u>

In the <u>right position</u>

At the <u>right time</u>

Succession Planning – Why Is this Important?

- Uncertainty and apprehension can result from major leadership changes.

  - Continuity is valuable in filling leadership positions.

- Because a pool of talent is readily available, the department can deal with filling leadership positions rapidly rather than taking time to deal with the problem.

  - Saves money and time.

  - Employees who wish to rise through the ranks have a clear pathway and opportunities at their department…..no need to look at another department.

Succession Planning – The Right Person

The <u>Right Person</u> in the <u>Right Position</u> at the <u>Right Time</u>

- The **<u>Right Person</u>**: Basic skills + the right fit

  ➢ Aptitude

  ➢ The Individual's Preferences, Aspirations

  ➢ People person or Technical Thinker??

  ➢ Personality

Once you can envision the attributes for the right person, you can consciously developing one or more people into that role.

Succession Planning – The Right Position

The Right Person in the Right Position at the Right Time

- The **Right Position**:

  ➢ What positions will we need to have filled?

  ➢ What does our future look like?

  ➢ Will we be consolidating with another department such that we'll have duplication of positions and potential layoffs?

Succession Planning – The Right Time

The <u>Right Person</u> in the <u>Right Position</u> at the <u>Right Time</u>

- The **<u>Right Time</u>**:

  ➢ Retirements

  ➢ Attrition expectations

  ➢ Unexpected events

Developing a Culture that Promotes Professional Development

Developing the Right Culture

- "Culture" is the shared body of traditions, language, behaviors, vision, goals and ethics.

- All organizations have a culture, by design or default.

The Importance of Culture

- There is synergism between culture and professional development.

- No department will ever implement a successful professional development program without embracing certain cultural values:

  ➢ Integrity/honesty. "We must talk straight, and we will act straight."

  ➢ Accountability, combined with a focus on problem solving rather than assigning blame

  ➢ Commission governance, as opposed to management

  ➢ "Team approach"

Exercise: Define Your Department's Culture

❑ How would You, as the *Fire Chief,* describe it?

❑ How would the Departments' *commissioners* describe it?

❑ How would the *FFs/EMTs/Medics* describe it?

❑ How would *Administrative Staff* describe it?

▪ If there's not general agreement, then there's some work to do.

Culture is the way you think, act, and interact.

The Culture Divide: Hypothetical #1

Facts:

- Long history of labor/management conflict. Frequent rotation of chiefs.

- The department's bargaining group is comprised primarily of younger members.

- Commission hires new chief who likes a challenge: motivated to turn things around by instilling accountability, responsibility, integrity, etc.

- Chief gets resistance from the union: grievances, complaints to commission, social media.

Strategies: What are some strategies to deal with this?

The Culture Divide: Hypothetical #2

<u>Facts</u>:

- Commission has long had a habit of delving into management issues and "second guessing" fire chief decisions, often in open meetings.

- Fire chief frustration and turnover after several years on the job is common.

- Attrition is high: leaving for other departments.

- The union respects the current chief, who is motivated to "right the ship."

- The commission fails to offer its support to the chief in terms of verbal support, budget appropriations, etc.

<u>Strategies</u>:   What are some strategies to improving this cultural situation?

The Culture Divide: Hypothetical #3

Facts:

- Well run Board of Fire Commissioners populated with people of good intentions and a desire to see the department prosper.

- Fire Chief isn't always straight with the commission, is poor manager of staff, tells inappropriate jokes to staff, and is careless.

- FFs don't really respect the Chief, but the commission isn't aware of this fact.

Question: How does a quality professional development program get off the ground in this department?

How to Implement a Professional Development Program

Implementation of PDP – Step 1

"Lets Get This In Writing"

- Draft a **Professional Development Policy** so that expectations are clearly understood

  ➢ Set reasonable timeframes and benchmarks for measuring progress

  ➢ Collaborate with labor in preparation of the plan

    - Obtain buy in from labor

    - Avoid the "top down" approach

Implementation of PDP – Policy Drafting

Plan Components – Factors to Consider

- Emphasize Quality over Quantity

- In addition to classes/conferences, look for opportunities for development in context of daily work

  ➤ Allows "hands on" experience

  ➤ Allows for "real time" discussion of different approaches

- "Make it Easy" – the "Nudge" concept

Implementation of PDP –Step 2

What's This going to cost?

- Develop **budget** for Professional Development Program

Implementation of PDP – Step 3

Formalize the Mentoring Component

- ❖ Make sure there are opportunities for formal mentoring of younger personnel

- ❖ Help the mentors become better mentors.

Implementation of PDP – Step 4

Embrace Challenges Along the Way…

❖ Recognize that you will face challenges, apathy, and resistance by some:

➢ Some individuals will always expect to be spoon-fed or have their training paid for, their overtime paid if they want to attend anything voluntarily, and their hands held throughout the process of doing their job or preparing for a promotion;

➢ This is not about them.

Fostering an Ongoing Environment of Professional Development

Fostering an Environment of Professional Development

❖ Do the Chief and Commission both embrace this as a priority for the Department?

❖ You have to start somewhere…and at some point:

– Challenge the "that's the way they've always done it here" mantra.

– Note: An organization that has historically done poor succession planning may have a difficult time initiating a culture of professional development with current personnel.

• A change in leadership is sometimes required to jump start the culture revolution.

Creating the Environment of Professional Development

- **What Should the Chief Do?**

  – Check in regularly with chief officers

    - Ensure that the program is working.

    - How do we improve the program?

    - Listen to suggestions, modify if necessary

What Can the Commission Do?

– Periodic dialogue with fire chief in open meeting will demonstrate commission's commitment to the effort

Environment of Professional Development

- Identify the Best Mentors in the Department and Utilize them effectively

  – Not everyone well suited to this task.

  – How do we purposely give them opportunities to mentor?

Environment of Professional Development

- Communication
  - Listening to frustrations of others
  - Responding to problems
- Disagreements are fine
  - But, respect is essential
  - Personal attacks not tolerated

Culture of Professional Development

- Teaching is much more than simply explaining how to do something. The most effective and successful teachers make a point of:

  – Developing a trusting relationship

  – Understanding students and how they learn

  – Being an active and effective listener

  – Creating a safe learning environment

Summary

Summary

- Focus on Organizational Culture as a Foundation..

- Invest Effort into Planning a Successful Professional Development program

- Invest Money into Making it successful.

- Use Mentorship and Team Approach to Make Everyone Successful.

Comments or Questions?

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