ROLES & RESPONSIBILITIES, LEADERSHIP TRAITS & SKILLS, AND

PERFORMANCE ASSESSMENT OF FIRE CHIEFS

EXECUTIVE LEADERSHIP

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CERTIFICATION STATEMENT

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

Signed: _____

Abstract

The problem was the Frederick-Firestone Fire Protection District (FFFPD) had not identified the components of an appraisal system for the position of Fire Chief. The purpose of this research was to identify the components of an executive performance appraisal instrument integrating roles and responsibilities, leadership traits and skills, and performance measures for the position of Fire Chief with the FFFPD. This was a descriptive research project utilizing three research questions: (a) What are the roles and responsibilities of a Fire Chief as defined by superiors, subordinates and peers, (b) What are important leadership traits and skills for the position of Fire Chief as defined by superiors, subordinates and peers, and (c) How is the performance of a fire chief assessed as defined by superiors, subordinates and peers. A feedback form (Appendix) was developed to gather data and to provide information to answer the research questions. A convenience sample of 105 participants was used and descriptive statistics were utilized to calculate and interpret the data generated. The results identified management of finance, operations, policy, public relations, and administration as the primary responsibilities of fire chiefs. Desired skills included; communication, decision making, interpersonal, and problem solving. Desired traits included; integrity, honesty, approachability, dependability, decisiveness, and confidence. The components of an executive performance appraisal were identified as; goal development, measurement of role fulfillment, assessment of leadership skills and traits, and an improvement action plan. Recommendations included development of an executive performance appraisal incorporating assessment of the aforementioned roles and responsibilities, leadership traits and skills, goal development, and an improvement plan. Future research recommendations included: (a) a more detailed analysis of the differences between perceptions of subordinates,

peers, and superiors, (b) a more thorough comparison between successful corporations and the

fire service, and (c) an analysis of the positive effects of actual executive performance appraisals.

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Introduction

The problem is the Frederick-Firestone Fire Protection District has not identified the components of an appraisal system for the position of Fire Chief. The Fire Chief is often considered the CEO of their respective department. Chief Executive Officers (CEO's) have diverse roles and responsibilities that often differ from the more clearly defined roles of other managers and employees in a company. Performance appraisals, also known as employee evaluations, have been adopted by many fire departments in order to guide and define positive performance in employees. However, in many cases a performance appraisal of the Fire Chief is either not performed or less formal in nature. Given the diversity and demands of the position, and the fact the organization's success can be dependent on the decisions and planning of the Fire Chief, it is crucial an effective appraisal is conducted on a regular basis in order to reinforce positive behaviors and alter negative behaviors for the benefit of the entire organization.

The purpose of this research is to identify the components of an executive performance appraisal instrument integrating roles and responsibilities, leadership traits and skills, and performance measures for the position of Fire Chief with the Frederick-Firestone Fire Protection District. This is a descriptive research project using the following research questions:

a) What are the roles and responsibilities of a Fire Chief as defined by superiors, subordinates and peers?

b) What are important leadership traits and skills for the position of Fire Chief as defined by superiors, subordinates and peers?

c) How is the performance of a fire chief assessed as defined by superiors, subordinates and peers?

Background and Significance

Information retrieved from the Frederick-Firestone Fire Protection District (2005) yields the information in the following paragraph. The Frederick-Firestone Fire Protection District (the District) is a Special District formed in 1976 under the Title 32 Special District Act of the State of Colorado. The District was formed to provide fire suppression and fire prevention services supported by property tax revenue collected from the residents living within its boundaries including portions of the Towns of Frederick and Firestone, and unincorporated areas of Weld County. This area, commonly known as Carbon Valley, began as a large mining area near the turn of the 20th century. Today the Carbon Valley area is experiencing large residential and commercial growth as urban sprawl extends from the Denver metropolitan region. In 2003, the Town Board of Trustees of both Firestone and Frederick unanimously approved the District as the sole emergency services provider within the two towns' current and future boundaries. In 2006, the District assumed ambulance transport services from the Tri-Area Ambulance District, which dissolved on December 31, 2005. The District is a combination fire service provider with an authorized full-time staff size of 31 supplemented by an additional reserve staff of 20 (Frederick-Firestone Fire Protection District, 2005).

The combined area of the two towns is currently 30 square miles with planning areas for future annexations totaling 72 square miles. The 2008 populations of both towns equaled 18,500 residents with an average growth rate of 16% each year (Town of Frederick, 2009). Given a rapidly expanding coverage area, limited manpower, and a growing population, the District faces many challenges and responsibilities when it comes to infrastructure and financial planning. With a transitioning agricultural industry and growing commercial and residential zones, the responsibility of tailoring prevention and response programs to meet such diverse needs is

tremendous. Planning for the future will require a steady hand of leadership and guidance as well as an analytical vision which will fall largely on the shoulders of the District's Fire Chief, both current and future.

In order to ensure stability in planning, implementation, and transition, the District's elected Board of Directors must define and develop a vision and set of objectives for the Fire Chief. These objectives should be used by the Fire Chief to develop strategies and tactics with other management staff in order to meet the future demands and ensure success. Given the growth is projected to continue over the next 20 years before build-out is complete, it is likely a transition in leadership will occur. By defining roles and responsibilities and identifying the necessary leadership qualities needed by the District's CEO, the Fire Chief, the Board of Directors will possess the essential tools to maintain stability and ensure smooth transition into the future. Once defined, these roles, responsibilities, and leadership qualities should be used to assess progress in the form of a performance appraisal for the Fire Chief in order to keep the individual in the position focusing the necessary attention in the appropriate areas. Setting up the CEO to be successful will serve to ensure the success of the organization as a whole.

This applied research project relates to Unit 3, Developing Self as a Leader and Unit 7, Succession/Replacement Planning of the National Fire Academy's Executive Leadership course (National Fire Academy, 2005). Unit 3 defines leaders as having "the ability to create and articulate a vision that empowers others to transform vision into action, and are social architects who build commitment and coalitions and listen to their constituents" (National Fire Academy, 2005, p. 3-3). Unit 7 states: "Once an organization defines its capabilities, there is improved clarity as to where key individual competencies need to exist as well as financial, technical, and staffing priorities" (National Fire Academy, 2005, p. 7-3). The United State Fire

Administration's (USFA) operational directive "to reduce the loss of life from fire" (National

Fire Academy, 2008, p. II-2) also relates to this research project which seeks to define a formal

feedback process for fire service leaders which will in turn provide stability of leadership and

planning in emergency service delivery to the community.

Literature Review

The purpose of this literature review was to present current information from contemporary

sources to support the foundation of this study. This researcher sought to find support for the

three research questions. First, what are the roles and responsibilities of a Fire Chief as defined

by superiors, subordinates and peers? Second, what are important leadership traits and skills for

the position of Fire Chief as defined by superiors, subordinates and peers? Finally, how is the

performance of a fire chief assessed as defined by superiors, subordinates and peers?

In support of the first research question, research conducted by Berthinier (1992) suggests

different roles and responsibilities of the Fire Chief based on the organization's structure. The

researcher focused on two basic organizational structures; the fire department and the fire

district. In a fire department, the fire chief reports to a city manager who acts as a buffer between

the elected officials and the fire chief according to Berthinier. As a result, the department fire

chief can focus less on broad policies and legal compliance issues and more on specific fire and

emergency service related issues. On the other hand, the researcher states the district fire chief

reports directly to the elected officials and acts as the overall administrator and CEO. Roles and

responsibilities in this case involve oversight of "all typical organizational functions such as

operations, personnel, administration, and finance" (Berthinier, 1992, p. 5). In general terms,

Berthinier states the elected Board of Directors is responsible for developing policy and the fire

chief is responsible for implementing those policies.

In a report written by Foley (2002), the author states the most important role of a fire chief is to keep the community informed of the department's capabilities. He stresses an uniformed public will develop misconceptions if not properly kept educated, and such misconceptions will lead to feelings that more could have been done at particular incidents or a false sense of security that will lead to a lack of individual preparedness. Part of the informing process involves performing a hazard and risk analysis of the community in order to determine specific resource and planning needs according to Foley. A comparison of the needs identified in the analysis must then be made to existing capabilities in order to determine the service gap. He further recommends the fire chief communicate this gap to the public so that they can make judgments on the current protection level and the level they desire.

A further role of the fire chief as described in an article by Cooke (2002) is promoting and managing organizational diversity. Cooke states the fire chief has the responsibility to alter dysfunctional culture by defining and shaping it. According to the author, the fire chief must establish which behaviors are acceptable and which are not early in their careers so as not to fall victim to exhibiting the very behaviors early on that he or she is advocating to change in the future. For the fire chief, the first step in altering a dysfunctional culture is to establish a vision for the organization's future as Cooke states. He says step two is to communicate that vision to the membership with passion and determination at every opportunity. Cooke identifies additional responsibilities of the fire chief when managing diversity as; keeping educated on applicable laws, modifying policies to ensure equal opportunity, and creating opportunities for success. The author describes a successfully diverse organization as "catalytic, empowering, and unifying, with the essence of principle-centered leadership. Its result is that the whole is greater than the sum of its parts" (Cooke, 2002, p. 146). In order to achieve the aforementioned, Cooke

recommends the following guidelines for fire chiefs to remember; creation of high standards, the culture should stimulate personal development, the culture should encourage openness, the culture must make every member feel valued, the organization's mission must be widely understood, and the organization should remain open to new alternatives to issues.

In support of the second research question, a chief officer's success is often determined by achievements and the level of credibility they possess in their organization (Coleman, 2004). Coleman states one of the most important characteristics of a leader is their decision making skills. He describes two types of decision making practices; decision making based on principles versus based on positions. If a decision is based on a position, it is susceptible to change over time, even if the core issue is the same. To the contrary, decisions based on principles are stable over time, assuming the individual establishes their core principles early on. Coleman defines two types of guiding principles for any leader. The first he describes as a list of traits, or observable characteristics, such as being approachable, compassionate, decisive, etc. The second type of guiding principle described by Coleman is a set of guidelines, or internal conduct a leader uses to approach a decision. The author uses the example of doing the right thing (guiding principles) in the right way (traits). Both are necessary in order to ensure the success of any decision, plan, or presentation.

In an article written by Bruegman (2002), the author describes four qualities possessed by successful leaders:

1. They expose weaknesses selectively to display approachability and humility.
2. They rely on their intuition to guide the timing and course of their actions.
3. They use empathy to manage their people and guide their work.
4. They reveal their differences in order to display what sets them apart from others.

Chief officers, according to Bruegman, must also be detail oriented to ensure when work is delegated it is completed appropriately so that it can be presented effectively to constituents. He further emphasizes the need for self-control, or leading by example. The chief cannot expect more out of their people than they give themselves, or they risk appearing hypocritical, or in his words; "You must commit to do more than you demand of the people following you" (Bruegman, 2002, p. 45).

Buckman (2004) discusses the importance of influence and the proper use of power as important characteristics of leaders. He states influence and power "allows one to make a difference in another's life, to have an effect, to leave something better behind" (Buckman, 2004, p. 26). The author lists three steps in leadership development:

1. Gaining experience through remaining alert as events happen.

2. Learning to be creative through creating a vision, developing the vision into something useful, selling the vision to others to solicit buy-in, implementing the vision, and evaluating its effects.

3. Taking charge in order to make things happen.

Buckman also describes the importance of recognizing forces that are uncontrollable, and instead of getting frustrated about them, developing a defensive strategy to lessen their impact.

In a book by Hunter (1998), the author discuses the importance of a leader seeing themselves as a servant more than a superior. Once this approach is taken, the leader becomes more sensitive to the needs of the group and serves as a guide to ensure those needs are met rather than viewing themselves above the group and thus becoming out of touch. Hunter centers this servant approach on the principle of charity. He stresses the need to use behavior instead of feelings

when interacting with others. Hunter defines eight behaviors directly related to charity and essential to leaders:

1. Patience – Showing self-control

2. Kindness – Giving attention, appreciation, and encouragement

3. Humility – Being authentic and without arrogance

4. Respectfulness – Treating others as important contributors

5. Selflessness – Meeting the needs of others

6. Forgiveness – Giving up resentment when wronged

7. Honesty – Being free from deception

8. Commitment – Sticking to your choices

This principle of leading through charitable behavior is summarized in the following passage:

Remember, especially in our organizations, that we are dealing with volunteers who happen to be adults. They are not slaves and they are not animals we're free to beat. Our job as leader is to point out any gaps between the standard that has been set and their performance, but it does not have to be an emotional event (Hunter, 1998, p.102).

Iacocca (2007) further expands the principle of leading by example in his second book. He states the job of a leader is to develop and accomplish goals that benefit the organization as a whole. In other words; "Here's the test of a leader: When he leaves office, we should be better off than when he started" (Iacocca, 2007, p. 24). When describing his success in guiding Chrysler from the brink of bankruptcy in the early 1980's, Iacocca says part of his business plan was to maintain a hot list which he updated weekly. This hot list should contain the leader's top priorities on a single sheet of paper: "If you can't state a priority in 50 words or less, you're in

trouble" (Iacocca, 2007, p. 23). The author discusses what he calls his *Nine C's of Leadership*, nine traits all leaders should possess. These traits as described by Iacocca are as follows:

1. Curiosity – The leader must seek information from several sources, including outside of the organization.

2. Creativeness – The leader must be willing to try something different.

3. Communication – The leader must be in touch with the reality of any situation and speak the truth to constituents.

4. Character – The leader must know the difference between right and wrong and have the fortitude to do what's right.

5. Courage – The leader must be dedicated to the course of action they decide on, even if it costs them popularity.

6. Conviction – The leader must have a passion for the job and be determined to accomplish the task at hand.

7. Charisma – The leader must have the ability to inspire action in others.

8. Competence – The leader must have knowledge of the situation and the ability to surround themselves with individuals who have a similar or greater knowledge.

9. Common Sense – The leader must have a clear understanding of the real world.

According to the author, the biggest test of a leader will come in times of crises, when all of the aforementioned traits will be needed to see the organization through.

In support of the third research question, Fred Fielder, a social scientist, measures effective CEO performance on the following three variables; leader-member relations based on trust, confidence, and respect of the leader, task structuring, and leader influence (Berthinier, 2002). Cooper (2000) identifies two main objectives of executive performance appraisals; auditing

performance and identifying opportunities for development. The researcher suggests several items must be considered when developing an appraisal including; development of quantifiable measures, organizational culture, and human behavioral characteristics. Furthermore, Cooper recommends incorporating individual job descriptions and job functions into the appraisal system. As a result performance ratings should be linked directly to the individual's job functions (Cooper, 2000).

In research conducted by Bercik (2005), it is suggested that an effective appraisal system should measure current performance, be behavior and outcome based, and provide reinforcing mechanisms. Bercik identifies five basic types of performance appraisals including; global ratings, trait-based scales, behavior-based scales, effectiveness-based systems, and 360-Degree appraisals. The researcher briefly describes each as follows. Global rating appraisals use the rater estimates performance without distinguishing critical job elements. Trait-based scales rate the individual based on global personality traits such as loyalty, attitude, and dependability. Behavior-based measure what the individual has accomplished based on specific items identified in a job position analysis. Effectiveness-based appraisals measure an individual's contributions to the organization, not their specific behaviors. 360-Degree appraisals utilize feedback from supervisors, peers, and customers to rate the individual's performance. Bercik analyzes several executive appraisal systems in use by several departments, and she identifies the strengths of each. The Los Angeles County Fire Department has three main components according to the researcher; goal development between the supervisor and employee and two behavior measures. The first behavior measure as described by Bercik is *Providing Quality Services* which rates the individual on customer service, workforce development, fiscal responsibility, and improvement of operations. She describes the second behavior scale as *Living by Organization Vision and*

Values which assesses team-building, organizational awareness, compliance with policies, innovation, and ethics.

The second executive appraisal system examined by Bercik was developed by the New South Wales Fire Brigade. She identifies two parts of this system; the *Individual Work Plan* and the *Individual development Plan*. The *Individual Work Plan* "clarifies individual work objectives and links them to corporate business plans, identifies an employee's successes along with constructively reviewing endeavors not successful" (Bercik, 2005, p. 23). The *Individual Development Plan* as described by the researcher allows the individual to rate their own development needs in ten competencies:

1. Management of community safety strategies

2. Administration of policies

3. Policy formulation

4. Maintenance of the safety/health system

5. Facilitation of change

6. Project management

7. Threat assessments

8. Promotion of the organization's mission

9. Management of communication strategies

10. Management of financial resources

The final appraisal system reviewed by Bercik was developed by the San Francisco Fire Department. This system, according to the researcher, rates the executive on their duties and responsibilities including; work environment development, emergency operations, prevention activities, administrative duties, training activities, and personnel management.

In a book written by the International Association of Fire Chiefs (1997) several executive performance appraisals in use by fire departments across the United States are reviewed. One of the appraisal systems reviewed was developed by the Phoenix Fire Department and contains a four-step process including; individual plan/goal development, plan implementation, self-evaluation, and salary setting. All of these systems utilize a progress meeting prior to the completion of the evaluation cycle, and a personal development plan defining ways to improve (Bercik, 2005).

Herr (1998) states executive performance appraisals should be focused on individual strengths, not weaknesses. The research suggests four questions be answered to determine whether this goal is being achieved:

1. What has the individual done well?

2. What therefore, is the individual likely to do well in the future?

3. What does the individual have to learn in order to be able to get the full benefit from their strength?

4. If I had a child, would I be comfortable to have them work under the individual?

Furthermore, Herr suggests executive performance appraisals should be designed to measure the leader against the values of the organization. He identifies 12 competencies that should be incorporated into an executive appraisal in order to accomplish this:

1. Representation and coordination between work groups

2. Awareness of external forces

3. Human resource management

4. Planning

5. Financial/resource management

6. Guidance and coaching skills

7. Monitoring and evaluation skills

8. Accomplishment assessment

9. Technical competence

10. Interpersonal skills

11. Communication skills

12. Leadership skills

In summary, the review of contemporary literature in support of the first research question offers several roles and responsibilities of fire chiefs. Among the most prominent are oversight of all organizational functions (Berthinier, 1992), keeping the community informed of risks and the department's capabilities (Foley, 2002), and promoting and managing organizational diversity (Cooke, 2002). With regard to recognized leadership skills and traits in support of the second research questions, many were described. Coleman (2004) states the most important is decision making skills. Bruegman (2002) adds that leaders must be detail oriented. Hunter (1998) promotes the use of behavioral charity in leaders, through the use of patience, kindness, humility, respectfulness, selflessness, forgiveness, honesty, and commitment. Iacocca expands on necessary leadership traits by developing his *Nine C's of Leadership*; curiosity, communication, character, courage, conviction, charisma, competence, and common sense. Finally, several characteristics of performance appraisals are listed in support of the third research question. Cooper (2000) suggests including two measures; auditing performance and identifying development opportunities. Bercik (2005) states performance appraisals should measure current performance, be behavior and outcome based, and provide reinforcing mechanisms. Herr (1998) identifies 12 competencies that should be incorporated into an

executive performance appraisal including; coordination, awareness, personnel management, planning, financial management, coaching skills, evaluation skills, accomplishment assessment skills, technical competence, interpersonal skills, communication skills, and leadership skills.

Procedure

Feedback Form

A feedback form (Appendix) was developed by the researcher to gather data on roles and responsibilities, leadership traits and skills, and performance assessment of the fire chief, and to provide information to answer the research questions. The feedback form contained 15 questions in three sections. The first section contained questions 1 through 3 which gathered participant information such as participant's position in their organization, specific job title, and appointment method. Question 1 had five possible multiple choice/single answer choices including an "other" fill-in option. Question 2 was a fill-in question. Question 3 was also a multiple choice/single answer question with four possible answers including an "other" fill-in option.

The second section contained questions 4 through 6 and was designed to gather information on the roles and responsibilities and desired leadership skills and traits of fire chiefs in support of the first and second research questions. Question 4 was a rated scale, multiple choice/single answer question which listed five roles of CEO's and asked the participant to rate them on a scale of one to five, with one being the most important. The participant could only select each rating once. Question 5 was a rated scale, multiple choice/single answer question which listed seven skills required by CEO's and asked the participant to rate them on a scale of one to seven, with one being the most important. The participant could only select each rating once. Question 6 was also a rated scale, multiple choice/single answer question which listed 18 leadership traits

and asked the participant to rate them on a scale of 1 to 18, with one being the most important. The participant could only select each rating once. Each of questions 4 through 6 also had an "other" answer in which the participant could fill-in an item they felt was missing from the lists.

The third and final section contained questions 7 through 15 designed to gather information on performance appraisals of CEO's in support of the third research question. Question 7 was a yes, no answer. Question 8 was a multiple choice/single answer question which listed the frequency of employee evaluations. Question 9 was also a yes, no answer and participants answering "yes" were directed to questions 10 through 14. Participants answering "no" to question 9 were directed to questions 14 and 15. Question 10 was a multiple choice/single answer question describing the difference between the appraisal systems used in the participant's organization. Question 11 was a multiple choice/single answer question listing the frequency of CEO evaluations. Question 12 was a yes, no question. Question 13 was multiple choice/multiple answer assessing the perceived shortfalls of performance appraisal systems. This question allowed the respondent to select any item that applied, and all responses were again converted to percentages. As a result the percentages had the potential of equaling more than 100%. Question 14 was also a multiple choice/multiple answer question assessing the components of a CEO performance assessment. All responses were again converted to percentages and as a result of being able to make multiple choices, the percentages had the potential of equaling more than 100%. Question 15 was only used for participants who answered "no" to question 9 and was a multiple choice/single answer question assessing the value placed on a CEO appraisal system.

The feedback form was created using *Survey Monkey*, an Internet program allowing members to design, distribute, and collect data from surveys. Once the feedback form was designed, it was distributed to municipalities, fire districts, and local businesses via e-mail. These organizations

were selected due to their cross-section of members who were involved in selecting and assessing CEO's in various disciplines. Data was collected for a period of two weeks and was later analyzed and compared to information presented in the literature review in order to determine support for the research questions.

Population

A convenience sample was used for this study. The sample population, selected from fire chiefs, fire service personnel, municipal elected and appointed officials, and business owners, was 105 (n=105). Due to the difficulty and cost of contacting each participant by mail, a sample of these groups was selected by utilizing e-mail lists of the Carbon Valley Chamber of Commerce, Town of Frederick, Town of Firestone, City of Dacono, Colorado Municipal League, and Weld County Fire Chief's Association. After the sample was selected, a link to the feedback forms including a cover letter explaining the purpose and giving instructions for the form were e-mailed to participants.

Statistical Analysis

Descriptive statistics were used to calculate and interpret the data generated from the feedback form. The responses for each question were tabulated and each question was converted to a percentage where applicable. Each response for the "other" responses to questions was also tabulated and converted to a percentage.

Limitations

As a result of the inability to distribute a feedback form to every fire service personnel, administrator, elected official, and business owner in the United States, the sample population was small compared to the total number of persons in the target groups. Furthermore, the

feedback form took approximately 10 minutes to complete and had some complex rating scales, which may have discouraged some prospective recipients from completing it. A further limitation was the inability to separate the responses based on the sub-groups, i.e. business owners, subordinates, elected officials, and managers. Finally, the researcher assumed all respondents answered honestly.

Definition of Terms

Chief Executive Officer (CEO) – The highest-ranking corporate officer or administrator in charge of the total management of a corporation, company, organization, or agency, reporting to an elected board of directors, synonymous with chief executive and district fire chief.

Fire Department - A public organization that provides fire protection for a certain jurisdiction as a subdivision of the jurisdiction's municipal or county governmental structure.

Fire District – A separate quasi-governmental agency established by state law for the purpose of providing local fire protection services having three features in common. First, each is located in a defined geographic area or "district" within a municipality or, in some cases, more than one municipality. Second, each serves as a funding vehicle and operational means by which certain public improvements and/or services are provided to benefit the inhabitants of the district. Third, real property within the district is subject to a "special" levy or assessment to finance its operations.

Leadership Skill – A learned ability used to effectively complete a task.

Leadership Trait – A quality or characteristic of an individual.

Service Gap – The difference between the assessed emergency resource needs and the actual resources possessed by a fire department or district as determined by a community hazard and risk analysis.

Results

A total of 86, or 81.9%, of the participants completed all of the questions on the questionnaire, with the remaining 19 participants completing only portions. One hundred and five of the respondents provided information for question one and two, which asked for their position type and job title. Table 1 displays the position classification of each of the participants in the study.

Table 1

Elected Official	Owner	CEO / Administrator	Department Head	Manager / Supervisor	Subordinate / Non Management
11	16	24	18	17	19
10.5%	15.2%	22.9%	17.1%	16.2%	18.1%

One hundred and two, or 97.1%, of the respondents answered the third question: "Are you elected by the public into your position or appointed by the organization?" Table 2 displays the method by which participants were appointed to their position.

Table 2

Publically Elected	Appointed / Hired	Elected by the Organization / Membership	Self-Employed
7	71	9	15
6.9%	69.6%	8.8%	14.7%

Eighty-nine, or 84.8%, of the respondents answered question 4: "What in your opinion are the roles and responsibilities of the Chief Executive in your organization, ranked in order of importance?" The question gave nine possible choices including; development of policies and procedures, Chief Financial Officer, public relations, coordination and oversight of operations, and coordination with external agencies. In addition, five of the respondents entered additional roles which included; vision and goal setting, coordination with elected officials, recruitment and retention, and administrative tasks. Figure 1 displays what role the respondents viewed as the most important.

Figure 1

Chief Executive Roles & Responsibilities
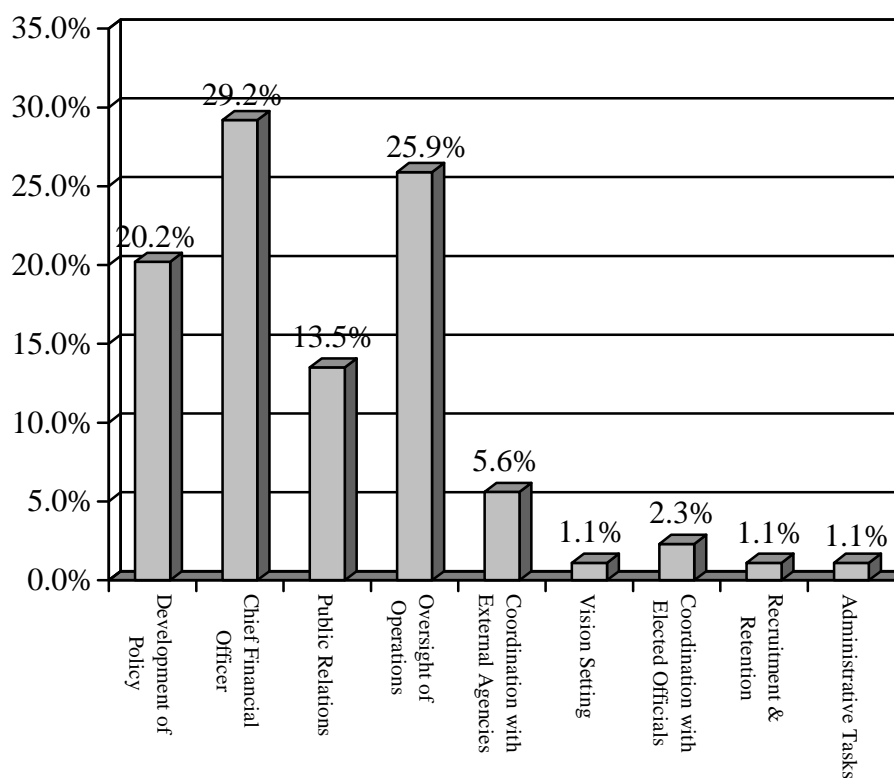
Question 5 asked: "What, in your opinion, are the skills required of the Chief Executive in your organization ranked in order of importance?" The question gave seven possible choices including; communication skills, interpersonal skills, judgment and decision making skills, innovation skills, problem solving skills, persuasion and influencing skills, and conflict resolution skills. Eighty-two, or 78.1%, of the respondents answered this question, and the results are displayed in Figure 2.

Figure 2

Chief Executive Skills
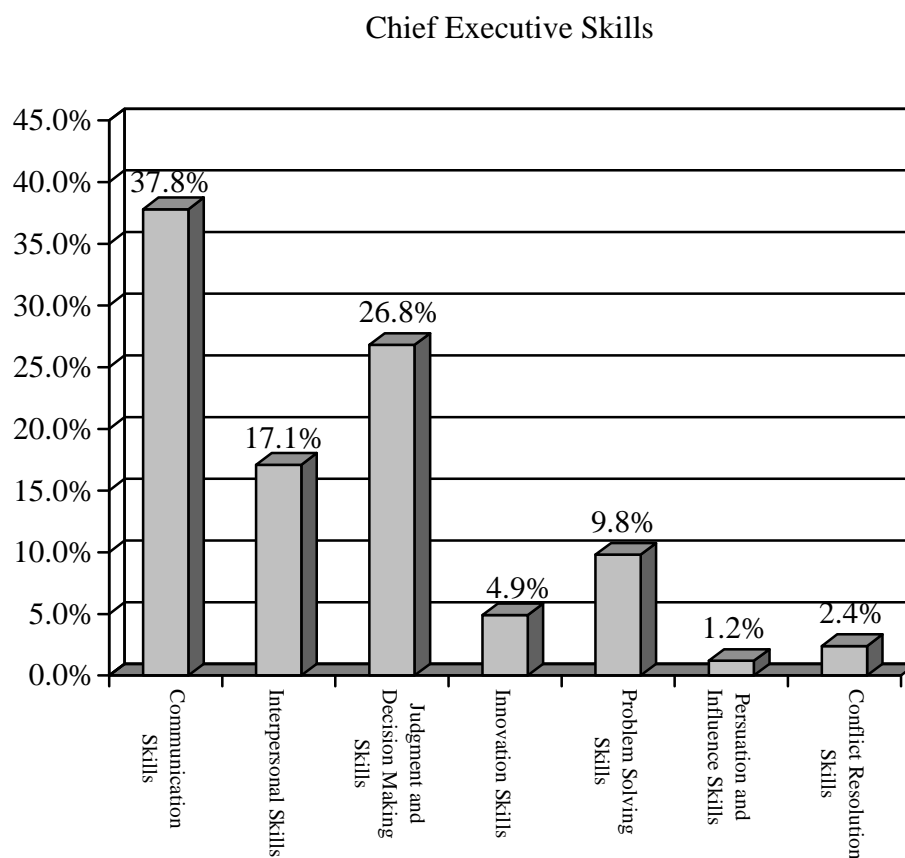
Eighty-six, or 81.9%, of respondents completed question 6. The question asked respondents to "Rate how important the following leadership qualities are to you when assessing your organization's Chief Executive." The question gave 18 possible choices including; integrity

and ethics, firmness and decisiveness, honesty, approachability and friendliness, listening skills,

innovative, intelligence and education, experience, risk taking, loyalty and dependability, energy,

visionary, confidence, empowering, organization skills, optimism, flexibility, and temperament

and emotional stability. Table 3 displays what leadership trait the respondents viewed as the

most important.

Table 3

Trait	Number Viewing as Most Important	Percentage Viewing as Most Important
Integrity & Ethics	55	63.9%
Honesty	12	14.0%
Visionary	5	5.8%
Listening Skills	3	3.5%
Temperament & Emotional Stability	3	3.5%
Approachability & Friendliness	2	2.3%
Loyalty & Dependability	2	2.3%
Organization Skills	2	2.3%
Firmness & Decisiveness	1	1.2%
Confidence	1	1.2%
Innovative	0	0%
Intelligence & Education	0	0%
Experience	0	0%
Risk Taking	0	0%

| Energy	0	0%
Empowering	0	0%
Optimism	0	0%
Flexibility	0	0%

Question 7 asked participants if their organization used a written performance appraisal

system. Of the 85, or 81.0%, who answered the question, 88.2% answered yes and 11.8%

answered no. When asked how often their organization conducted their appraisals in question 8,

84 respondents, or 80.0%, answered the question. The question allowed for four possible choices

including; annually, semi-annually, quarterly, or monthly. Additionally, respondents were able to

enter a choice not provided. The responses to question 8 are displayed in Figure 3.

Figure 3

Frequency of Employee Performance Appraisals
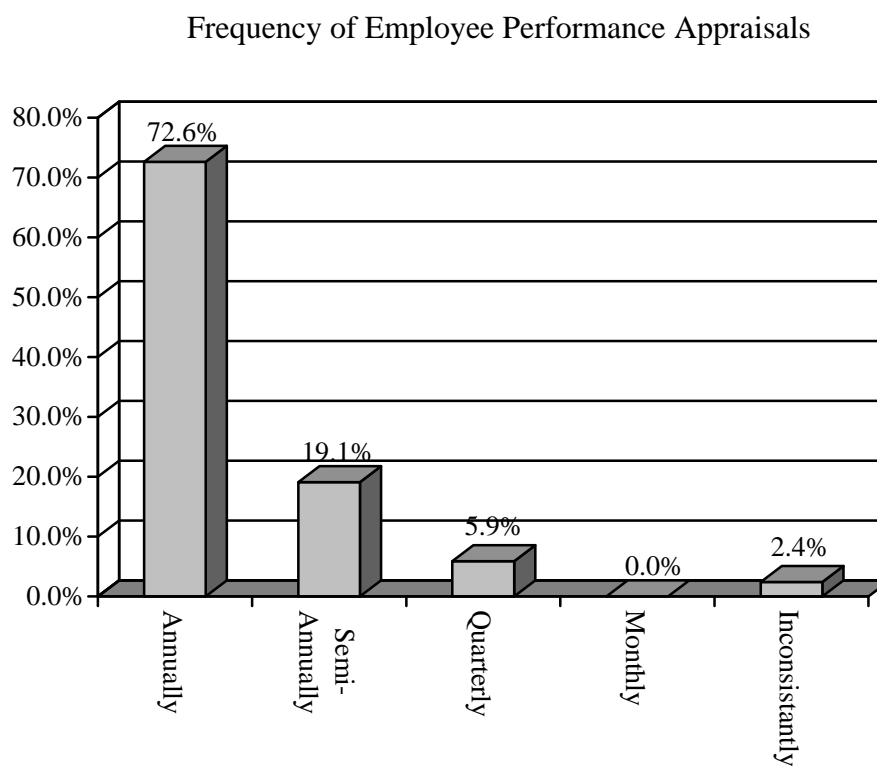
A total of 89 respondents, or 84.8% answered question 9 which asked: "Does the Chief Executive receive a performance appraisal?" Of the responses, 66 (74.2%) answered yes and 23 (25.8%) answered no. Of those answering yes to question 9, 59 respondents answered question 10 which asked: "What type is your executive performance appraisal?" The answers consisted of two possible choices; the same as the appraisal used for other employees and different from the appraisal used for other employees. To the former, 21 (35.6%) answered in the affirmative as compared to 38 (64.4%) answering affirmative to the latter. Question 11 asked: "How often is the Chief Executive's appraisal administered?" The question provided four possible choices including; annually, semi-annually, quarterly, and monthly as well as a write-in response. Of the 62 respondents, 55 (88.7%) answered annually, 3 (4.9%) semi-annually, 1 (1.6%) quarterly, 1 (1.6%) wrote-in inconsistently, and 2 (3.2%) stated they were unsure. The responses to question 11 are displayed in Figure 4.

Figure 4

Frequency of Executive Performance Appraisals
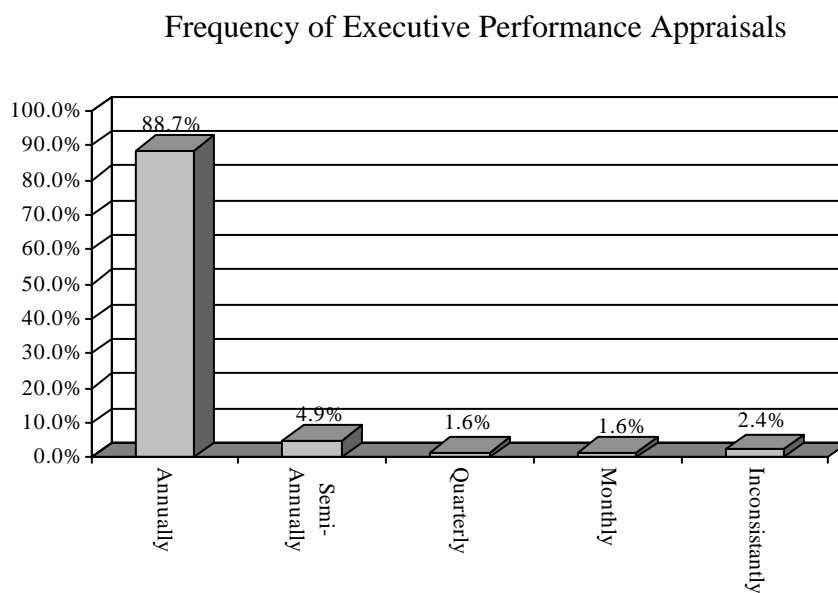
Sixty participants (57.1%) answered question 12 which asked: "Do you believe your

executive performance appraisal system effectively evaluates the overall performance of the

employee?" Of the responses, 43 (71.7%) were yes and 17 (28.3%) were no. When asked in

question 13; "What, in your opinion, are the shortfalls of your organization's executive

performance appraisal?" 60 (57.1%) participants responded. Nineteen (31.7%) stated there were

no shortfalls, 27 (45.0%) stated the appraisals were too subjective, 10 (16.7%) said the appraisals

measured the wrong thing, 9 (15.0%) said there should be incentives tied to the appraisal, 2

(3.3%) stated the appraisal did not measure current roles, and 11 (18.3%) responded the appraisal

did not provide guidance for improvement. Additionally, three respondents wrote-in additional

shortfalls including 1 (1.7%) who stated there was not enough structure in the evaluation process,

1 (1.7%) who stated the evaluator was not a witness to actual performance, and 1 (1.7%) who

stated there was no input from subordinates. Responses to question 13 are displayed in Figure 5.

Figure 5

Shortfalls of Executive Performance Appraisals
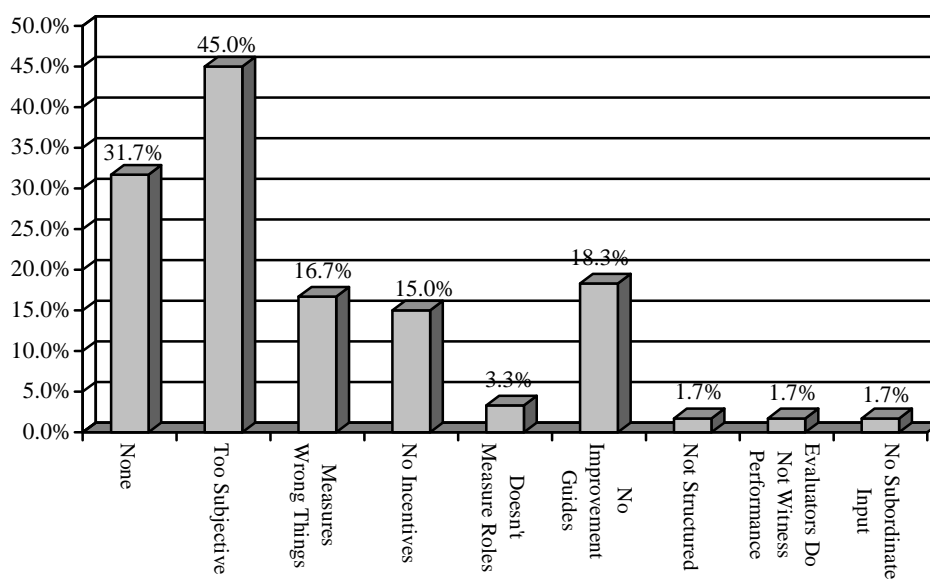
Eighty-two participants answered question 14 which asked: "What components, in your opinion, should an executive performance appraisal instrument contain?" Respondents made selections from 13 possible choices including; written procedures, rating of leadership traits, ratings measuring position's roles and responsibilities, self-appraisal component, subordinate and peer appraisal component, supervisor's appraisal component, benchmarks to attain each rating, defined potential ratings, behavior assessment, improvement action plan, goal development, assessment of leadership skills, and salary incentives. Table 4 lists the respondents' rating of executive performance appraisal components.

Table 4

Component	Number of Respondents	Percentage of Respondents
Goal Development	60	73.2%
Measurement of Position Roles	59	71.9%
Assessment of Leadership Skills	57	69.5%
Self-Appraisal Component	54	65.9%
Improvement Action Plan	52	63.4%
Subordinate & Peer Appraisal Component	45	54.9%
Salary Incentive	43	52.4%
Rating of Leadership Traits	42	51.2%
Supervisor Appraisal Component	42	51.2%
Benchmarks for Ratings	41	50.0%

Written Procedures	31	37.8%
Behavior Assessment	23	28.1%
Potential Ratings Defined	18	21.9%

Question 15, the final question, was only answered by participants answering no to question 9. The question was: "Do you think an executive performance appraisal would be valuable in your organization?" Three possible choices were provided including; extremely valuable, somewhat valuable, and not valuable. Only 23 (21.9%) participants answered this question with 8 (34.8%) stating extremely valuable, 12 (52.2%) stating somewhat valuable, and 3 (13.0%) stating not important.

Discussion

Fire chiefs of a fire district are often viewed as similar to a CEO of a company due to their expanded responsibilities over their counterparts in traditional fire departments. District fire chiefs possess the overall role of managing finance, personnel, administration, and operations (Berthinier, 1992). Question 4 was developed to examine the perceived roles and responsibilities of district fire chiefs in an organization. The responses support the aforementioned roles and responsibilities identified in the literature review. The top five roles and responsibilities as identified by the participants include; management of finance, operations, policy, public relations, and interagency coordination. Additional roles of district fire chiefs are identified as organizational vision development, administrative tasks, and personnel recruitment and retention. This information is important for three reasons. First, if an individual is to be successful in a particular job, they must have a clear understanding of what their roles and responsibilities will be. Furthermore, in order for an organization to identify a potential candidate for a position, the

roles and responsibilities must be clearly identified and compared to the candidate's capabilities. Finally, the effectiveness of the individual must be measured periodically against those identified roles and responsibilities to determine if the organization is being successfully managed.

The second research question was developed to identify the desired leadership skills and traits of fire chiefs. Questions 5 and 6 on the feedback form were designed to assess how peers, subordinates, and superiors value various leadership traits in their CEOs. Two items are focused on; basic leadership skills and personal leadership traits. The top skills as identified by the participants in the research are communication skills, decision making skills, interpersonal skills, and problem solving skills, each of which was supported by the review of contemporary literature. The most important leadership traits identified in question 6 are; integrity, honesty, visionary, temperament, approachability, dependability, organization, decisiveness, and confidence. The literature review identifies several of the same traits. Given the diverse roles and responsibilities of the position, district fire chiefs need to have a well established set of values and principles that drive their decisions (Coleman, 2004). The proper use of influence and power to achieve positive outcomes is another skill required of leaders. The goal of employing influence over others should always be driven by ensuring a positive effect on the organization and others (Buckman, 2004). Hunter (1998) furthers this principle by stressing the importance of charitable behavior when exercising the power of leadership. Charity, as defined by Hunter, involves eight behaviors; patience, kindness, humility, respectfulness, selflessness, forgiveness, honesty, and commitment. From this information, a common theme arises. Effective leaders must view themselves as servants to the organization. The more power one achieves, the more they should use that power to benefit others and further the organization's mission.

The third research question was developed to combine the information from research questions one and two with additional information to assist in the future development of an effective executive performance appraisal. Effective performance appraisals should measure performance against established roles and responsibilities of the position as well as traits necessary to complete objectives (Herr, 1998). Of the participants in the research, over 88% state their organization uses some form of an employee appraisal system and nearly three-fourths of those are conducted on an annual basis. Furthermore, nearly three-fourths state their organizations have a similar performance appraisal for the leader of the organization. As in the employee appraisals, most executive appraisals are conducted annually. Of the participants who stated their organization did not have an executive performance appraisal, 87% believe such an instrument would be valuable. This information displays the perceived importance of a performance appraisal instrument for executives.

Cooper (2000) says an appraisal should audit performance and identify methods for improvement. Nearly two-thirds of the research participants reinforce Cooper's premise that an improvement action plan should be part of an appraisal instrument. The review of contemporary literature suggests several components be part of an executive performance appraisal. Bercik (2005) evaluates several different types of performance appraisals and recommends a 360-degree appraisal be used for executives. Such an appraisal instrument incorporates elements of a self-appraisal, subordinate appraisal, and a supervisor's appraisal in order to portray an overall picture of an executive's performance. Similarly, participants in this research identify these three components as important in assessing the executive's performance. The principle is each of the groups has different interactions with the individual and can measure various components of the

executive's skills and effectiveness. Superiors will assess goal achievement whereas subordinates will focus more on interpersonal skills.

   Over 50% of the research participants identify the following components as essential in an executive performance appraisal; goal development, measurement of role fulfillment, assessment of leadership skills and traits, an improvement action plan, and established benchmarks for rating attainment. Similarly, review of the contemporary literature identifies similar components for an executive performance appraisal to be effective. One thing to guard against when developing an appraisal instrument is subjectivity. Each appraisal should be quantifiable and tied to defined standards. Another method in limiting subjectivity is diluting its effect through the aforementioned use of multiple group ratings.

<div align="center">Recommendations</div>

   Given the diverse roles and responsibilities of the district fire chief, as well as the effects an executive can have on an organization, proper and early identification of the necessary skills, responsibilities, and individual traits necessary for an individual to be successful in the position are essential. Additionally, continuing appraisal of performance and identification of improvements are crucial to ensuring individual and the organizational success. It is for these reasons the Frederick-Firestone Fire Protection District as well as other fire districts should develop an executive performance appraisal system for the fire chief.

   The basic categories of this instrument should be a goal development section, role fulfillment section, leadership skills and traits assessment section, and an improvement plan section. Measurements in each of these sections should be completed by the executive's superior(s), subordinates, as well as the executive them self. It is also important the assessment be completed at least annually with a beginning development session and a semi-annual progress review.

The goal development section should begin with a discussion session or workshop utilizing input from the executive, superiors, and subordinates. Each of these groups possesses valuable knowledge and different perspectives of the organization's mission and performance. Benchmarks for goal achievement and ratings should also be developed.

The role fulfillment section should contain a definition of each of the roles and responsibilities of the fire chief position. These roles and responsibilities should include; financial management, operations management, policy development and enforcement, public relations, and interagency coordination, vision development and representation, administrative management, and personnel management. Further roles and responsibilities should be identified at the initial workshop, and benchmarks for ratings should be established.

The leadership traits and skills section should also be developed in the initial workshop utilizing input from the three stakeholder groups. Communication skills, decision making skills, interpersonal skills, and problem solving skills should be among the skills assessed. Similarly, integrity, honesty, visionary, temperament, approachability, dependability, organization, decisiveness, and confidence should be among the traits assessed.

The improvement plan section should be developed during the semi-annual progress review and should contain specific shortfalls in performance and descriptive methods for improvement, as well as performance outcomes. The goal of the overall appraisal process should not be punitive, but instead to develop and reinforce desired performance and behavior. Consistency, objectiveness, well-rounded input, and thoroughness are all essential if the appraisal instrument is to be successful in achieving these goals.

Future research on the topic of executive roles and responsibilities, leadership skills and traits, and executive performance assessment should include a more detailed analysis of the differences

between perceptions of subordinates, peers, and superiors when it comes to executive assessment. Also, a more thorough comparison between successful private corporations and the fire service in the area of effective leadership should be studied. A final topic for future research in this area should include an analysis of the positive effects of actual executive performance appraisals on the individual and the organization. It can be summarizes from this research project that thorough identification of roles and responsibilities, desired leadership traits and skills, and development of appraisal mechanisms is essential to an executive's success and thus the overall effectiveness and success of the organization.

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Appendix

Questionnaire

My name is Ted Poszywak, Fire Chief for the Frederick Firestone Fire Protection District. I am currently enrolled in the Executive Fire Officer Program at the National Fire Academy. One of the criteria of the program is the completion of an applied research project. The following questionnaire is part of my applied research project for the Executive Leadership course and was designed to gather information regarding Executive Roles & Responsibilities, Leadership Qualities, and Performance Appraisals. It will take approximately 10 minutes to complete the questionnaire and your responses combined with those of others will be used to assist in developing an Executive Performance Appraisal. Your responses will be anonymous. Please paste the link below into your browser and it will take you to the survey. Thank you in advance for your time and assistance.

http://www.surveymonkey.com/s.aspx?sm=KGUlpEW2tAr9YZL9qbXkJA_3d_3d

SECTION 1 – PARTICIPANT INFORMATION

1. What is your position in your organization?

   a. Elected Official

   b. Chief Executive Officer/Administrator

   c. Department Head

   d. Manager/Supervisor

   e. Other (please specify):

2. What is your specific job title?

3. Are you elected by the public into your position or appointed by the organization?

    a. Elected by the public

    b. Appointed by a superior or elected body

    c. Elected by the membership of the organization

    d. Other (please specify):

SECTION 2 – CHIEF EXECUTIVE ROLES AND QUALITIES

4. What, in your opinion, are the roles and responsibilities of the Chief Executive in your organization ranked in order of importance (1 = most important)?

    a. Development of Policies and Procedures

    b. Chief Financial Officer (Budget development and management, managing expenditures/revenue)

    c. Public Relations

    d. Coordination/Oversight of Operations

    e. Coordination with external agencies

    f. Other (please specify):

5. What, in your opinion, are the skills required of the Chief Executive in your organization ranked in order of importance (1 = most important)?

   a. Communication Skills (written and verbal)

   b. Interpersonal Skills

   c. Independent Judgment and Decision Making Skills

   d. Innovation

   e. Problem Solving Skills

   f. Persuasion/Influencing Skills

   g. Conflict Resolution Skills

   h. Other (please specify):

6. Rate how important the following leadership qualities are to you when assessing your organization's Chief Executive (not the current individual, but anyone potentially in the position): (1 = most important, use each rating only once)

   a. Integrity and Ethics

   b. Firmness and Decisiveness

   c. Honesty

   d. Approachability and Friendliness

   e. Listening Skills

   f. Innovative

   g. Intelligence and Education

   h. Experience

   i. Risk Taking

   j. Loyalty and Dependability

k. Energy

l. Visionary

m. Confidence

n. Empowering

o. Organizational Skills

p. Optimism

q. Flexibility

r. Temperament/Emotional Stability

SECTION 3 – EXECUTIVE PERFORMANCE APPRAISALS

7. Does your organization have a written performance appraisal (employee evaluation) system?

   a. Yes

   b. No

8. How often are appraisals/evaluations conducted?

   a. Annually

   b. Semi-Annually

   c. Quarterly

   d. Monthly

   e. Other (please specify):

9. Does the Chief Executive receive a performance appraisal?

   a. Yes

   b. No (go to question 14)

10. What type is your executive performance appraisal?

    a. The same as the appraisal used for other employees

    b. Different from the appraisal used for other employees

11. How often is the Chief Executive's appraisal administered?

    a. Annually

    b. Semi-Annually

    c. Quarterly

    d. Monthly

    e. Other (please specify):

12. Do you believe your executive performance appraisal system effectively evaluates the overall performance of the employee?

    a. Yes

    b. No

13. What, in your opinion, are the shortfalls of your organization's executive performance appraisal?

    a. None

    b. Too subjective (ratings too susceptible to the <u>opinion</u> of the evaluator)

    c. Measures the wrong things

    d. No incentives tied to performance

    e. Measurement items do not relate to my current job

    f. Does not provide guidance for improvement

    g. Other (please specify):

14. What components, in your opinion, should an executive performance appraisal instrument contain?

    a. A written procedure on how to complete the instrument

    b. Rating of leadership traits

    c. Specific job-related assessment tied to position's roles and responsibilities

    d. Self appraisal component

    e. Subordinate/Peer appraisal component

    f. Supervisor's appraisal component

    g. Benchmarks to attain each rating

    h. Defined potential ratings

    i. Behavior assessment

    j. Improvement action plan

    k. Goal development

    l. Assessment of leadership skills

    m. Salary/bonuses tied to positive performance

    n. Other (please specify):

15. If you answered no to item #9, do you think an executive performance appraisal would be valuable in your organization?

    a. Extremely Valuable

    b. Somewhat Valuable

    c. Not Valuable