

CREATING A MORE CULTURALLY DIVERSE WORKFORCE IN THE PARK
RIDGE FIRE DEPARTMENT

Executive Development

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Abstract

As our society continues to change at an ever-increasing rate, a key issue that will confront every aspect of American culture is organizational diversity. For all intents and purposes, organizational diversity can be defined as the effective employment, development and management of a multicultural work force.

The City of Park Ridge is an Equal Opportunity Employer, yet the lack of organizational diversity is obvious. This lack of diversity is especially obvious in the fire department. The lack of diversity indicated that the current hiring practices of the Park Ridge Fire Department have not resulted in the creation of a culturally diverse workforce. This problem was the focus of this research.

The purpose of this research was to identify and evaluate factors that negatively influence and/or inhibit organizational diversity in the fire department. Descriptive and evaluative research methodologies were utilized in the development of this research paper. The research questions that were identified and addressed were:

1. What are the current methods utilized in the recruiting and hiring process?
2. Why haven't the current methods resulted in the recruitment, hiring and retention of qualified minority applicants?
3. What new methods can be developed to increase cultural diversity within the fire department?
4. How can these methods be implemented?

The evaluative research methodology included the utilization of a force field analysis as a problem refinement model to develop rational methodologies for selecting alternative solutions to the problems illuminated by the research questions. Additionally,

a weighted alternatives matrix was utilized to determine the best course of action based upon the findings of the force field analysis.

The results of this research indicated that the current hiring practices of the Park Ridge Fire Department have not succeeded in creating a culturally diverse workforce. This research culminated with the recommendation of developing a well-planned, comprehensive program of recruitment, testing and selection of minority candidates. This recommendation was the most practical and rational approach to increasing organizational diversity in the Park Ridge Fire Department.

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Introduction

The City of Park Ridge is an Equal Opportunity Employer, yet the lack of organizational diversity is obvious. This lack of diversity is especially obvious in the Fire Department. The lack of diversity indicates that the current hiring practices of the Park Ridge Fire Department have not resulted in the creation of a culturally diverse workforce. This problem is the focus of this research.

The purpose of this research is to identify and evaluate factors that negatively influence and/or inhibit organizational diversity in the Park Ridge Fire Department. Descriptive and evaluative research methodologies are utilized in the development of this research paper. The research questions that are identified and addressed are:

1. What are the current methods utilized in the recruiting and hiring process?
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4. How can these methods be implemented?

Background and Significance

Background

The City of Park Ridge is an urban residential community located 15 miles northwest of downtown Chicago. Originally settled in 1840, Park Ridge has grown into a medium sized city. The city is situated in a key geographic location in close proximity to O'Hare International Airport, the Northwest Tollway, the Kennedy Expressway, CTA Rapid Transit and the Metra Railroad. Park Ridge has a long established reputation as a

stable residential community known for its well-maintained homes, tree lined streets and outstanding schools. There are 14,219 housing units in Park Ridge and over 88% are owner occupied. The average sales price for a single-family home in 2000 was \$377,736. These characteristics have resulted in Park Ridge being well known as a conservative, middle to upper class, well maintained community that offers the advantages of a small town with all the benefits of a large municipality. Upwardly mobile professionals as well as established families reside within its borders.

Demographics

Based on the 2000 census the city has 37,775 residents, represented by 95% white (non-Hispanic), and 3% Asian. Other minorities represent less than 1% of the population. With respect to gender, the population is comprised of 48% male and 52% female. Land use is predominantly residential with only 5.0% commercial and 9.0% public/institutional. There is little or no undeveloped land in Park Ridge, with most development resulting from the demolition of existing structures.

Based on the 2001 Equal Opportunity Employer report, the City of Park Ridge has 380 employees, represented by 340 white males (89.0%), 39 white females (10.0%), and one African American male (<1%). The fire department's 53 full time personnel are all white males with the exception of one female firefighter and one female secretary.

Demographic Projection

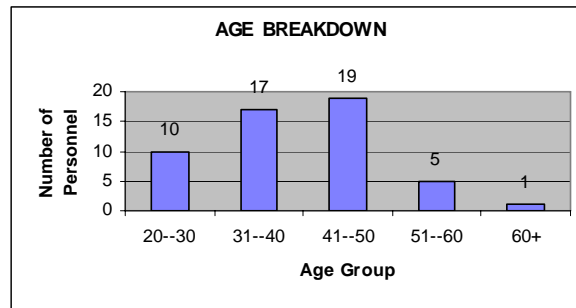
The United States is experiencing a major, if not, radical demographic transition. Thomas (1991, p.5) stated that from 1985 to the year 2000, minorities, women and immigrants will compose 85% of the growth in the work force. White Americans will be in the minority, surpassed by Americans of Indian, Asian, African and Spanish descent.

The combination of an older, shrinking white America and a younger, growing minority population indicates that many professions may soon see white males as a minority in the work force.

Current and Projected Status of the Park Ridge Fire Department

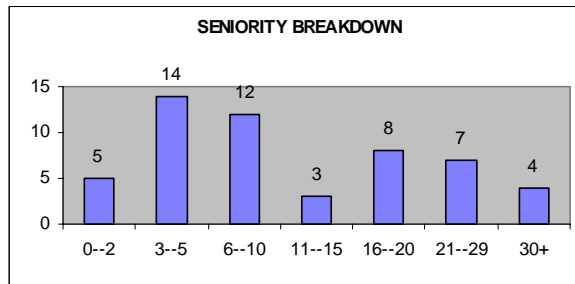
Presently, the Park Ridge Fire Department consists of 51 white male professional fire fighters and 1 white female fire fighter with an average age of 38.74 and average tenure of 12.38 years

**Table 1
Park Ridge Fire Personnel Age Breakdown**

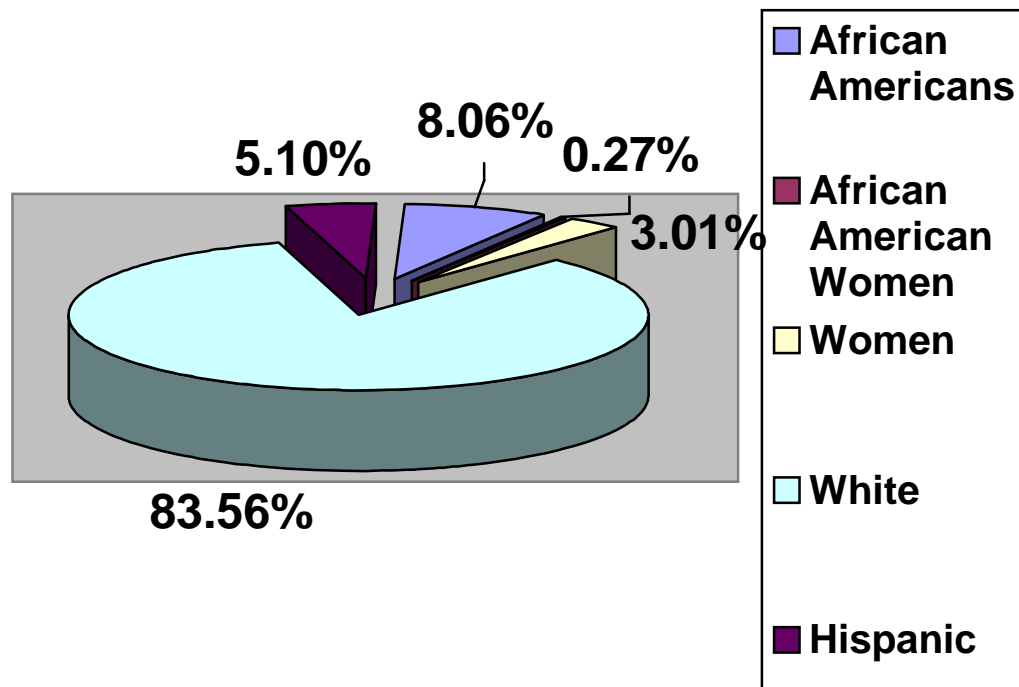


Currently, the average tenure on the department is 12.38 years, however six fire fighters are currently eligible for retirement, having sufficient time on the job to qualify for pension and being over fifty years of age. Within the next 5-7 years the department will experience a transition phase as almost one-third of all existing personnel will have retired or will be eligible for retirement. A progressive approach by management anticipating the shift in demographics may be necessary to prepare for a changing work force.

**Table 2
Park Ridge Fire Personnel Seniority Breakdown**



Based on the most recent labor statistics gathered from Internet sources (2002-
www.wfsi.org, www.iabpff.org), the fire service is comprised of the following:



In Illinois, 183 women work for 66 full time fire departments, of which 80 work for Chicago (2002- www.wfsi.org). Recent trends show that these figures are changing although these were the most current statistics available.

Current Recruitment/Selection Process

The City of Park Ridge has elected to contract out the orientation, written and physical agility examination processes for entry-level position of firefighter, through an approved testing agency employed by the Northwest Municipal Conference (NWMC). The NWMC is a consortium of communities that combines purchases and testing procedures with the intent of cost savings. Testing is conducted in accordance with established Rules and Regulations of the Board of Fire and Police Commissioners.

The Board of Fire and Police Commissioners is comprised of seven members appointed by the Mayor. The Board oversees the necessary testing processes and is responsible for all testing procedures following the entry-level orientation, written and physical agility examinations for firefighter.

The Board of Fire and Police Commissioners derives its powers and authority from an Act of the Illinois General Assembly as detailed in Chapter 65 of the Illinois Compiled Statutes (5/10-2.1-1) except where the statute is inconsistent with the provisions of the Home Rule, Chapter 4 of the Park Ridge Municipal Code. According to the Act, an entry-level eligibility list must be established every two years. When the list is within a few months of expiring, the Board of Fire and Police Commissioners begins the process of establishing a new one.

The testing process is comprised of the following:

1. Mandatory orientation *
2. Written exam * 70% or better

3. Physical agility test * Pass/Fail
4. Oral interview with the Board of Fire and Police Commissioners Pass/Fail
5. Background investigation Pass/Fail
6. Polygraph exam Pass/Fail
7. Psychological exam Pass/Fail
8. Medical exam Pass/Fail (post-offer)

* As established by the NWMC

Dates for the orientation, written and physical agility, are established by NWMC.

Advertisements are placed in several newspapers to announce the testing process for potential applicants. It is important to note that no formal recruitment program exists. The NWMC only advertises the testing process in local newspapers and on their website. On a regular basis, the Fire Department receives a number of telephone calls from persons interested in becoming a firefighter and participating in the testing process. Generally, all callers are referred to the NWMC. They can provide additional information relative to when and where the testing process will occur. There is also an informal method that exists to notify potential applicants about the testing process. The Park Ridge Fire Department is comprised of 53 personnel who provide testing information by word of mouth.

The Northwest Municipal Conference selection process occurs twice a year. Each municipality choosing to use the consortium has a two-year eligibility list established from a master list of successful candidates. The process is as follows (November 2000 Northwest Municipal Conference Fire Test Cycle Statistical Report):

New candidates attend an orientation meeting that explains the process as well as announces the departments whose eligibility lists have already expired or soon will. Orientation is mandatory and only those applicants that have attended the orientation may continue in the process. After the orientation session, a written examination is administered. This exam is a standardized general ability test oriented to the fire service profession. Generally, the top 125 candidates continue on to the physical agility examination, depending on the size of the candidate pool that the fire departments participating in the NWMC testing consortium agree to.

The next phase of the testing process consists of a physical agility test comprised of seven events simulating fire department functional tasks. A candidate must successfully complete the physical agility test to continue in the testing process.

Those candidates successfully passing both the written examination and the physical agility test are competitively ranked on a master eligibility list based on their written test scores. This master list is then presented to each department participating in the testing cycle. From this list each department will contact candidates that have chosen to continue with the selection process.

The candidates with the highest written test scores are contacted for oral interviews with the Board of Fire and Police Commissioners. The board utilizes very specific criteria to establish a final eligibility list according to these new criteria. This criterion consists of education, fire and EMS experience, goals and objectives, as well as written and oral communication skills. Generally speaking, the Park Ridge Fire Department will select 24 candidates to interview with the Board of Fire and Police Commissioners. The board has historically passed about half of the candidates each time.

This is a limiting factor of the process with respect to establishing a large applicant pool to select from. The board has to select common dates to establish a quorum and typically doesn't want to spend more than three evenings interviewing candidates. Additionally, the board has established a limit of eight candidates each evening.

The Northwest Municipal Conference Fire Test Statistical Report (November 2000), indicates that 790 prospective applicants attended the written examination. The composition breakdown is as follows:

Table 3
NWMC Fire Test Data- November 2000

	White	Black	Hispanic	Asian	Didn't state
<u>Male</u>	654	10	40	8	8
<u>Female</u>	54	2	8	1	5
<u>Total %</u>	90%	.01%	.06	.01%	.01

From these initial candidates neither ethnic minorities nor females were hired.

Significance

This research is significant to the fire department as well as the community it serves for numerous reasons. Clearly, demographic studies as well as recruitment/selection statistics indicate a serious lack of organizational diversity in the Park Ridge Fire Department. These figures also indicate a lack of organizational diversity in all of the fire departments participating in the Northwest Municipal Conference Testing Consortium.

This phenomena, the dominance of white male employees, is unmatched by any other profession in our nation's work force. The Park Ridge Fire Department exemplifies

this dominance. A comprehensive investigation of the broad, global factors inhibiting diversity as well as factors specific to the Park Ridge Fire Department will be necessary in order to develop a plan to promote organizational diversity.

The implications resulting from a non-diverse work force can be potentially far reaching. Perhaps the most serious and relevant implication to the City of Park Ridge may be the failure to comply with Equal Opportunity Commission Guidelines. As our nation's work force changes, Equal Employment Opportunity guidelines reflect this change. Failure to anticipate the upcoming transition in personnel may result not only in a violation of Equal Employment Opportunity guidelines but in a shortage of qualified minority personnel to fill these vacancies.

There is an expectation that the agency's sworn work force will be representative of the population of the service area relative to its composition of minorities and women. The standards require an affirmative action plan aimed at any protected group-minorities or women- where analysis demonstrates that the agency is underrepresented. Affirmative action and EEO are related but distinctly different entities. Where EEO envisions fair and equal opportunities for all people, affirmative action involves proactive steps that will be taken to encourage members of underrepresented groups to seek employment opportunities. Affirmative action does not mandate hard quotas, such as hiring two females for every male hired, nor is an agency expected to lower legitimate job-related hiring standards or criteria. By the same logic, agencies are never expected to hire an individual who is not qualified to perform the duties of the job involved. However, if an agency is underrepresented, it is expected to prepare a plan of action specifically detailing the activities it intends to implement to increase the pool of qualified applicants from

these groups, and thereby provide the opportunity for a fair and equitable selection process to cause these individuals to be hired.

Clearly, the Park Ridge Fire Department is far from compliance with these standards. According to the standard, the fire department should resemble the community it serves, with respect to female and minority status. The following table draws a comparison between work force composition and community composition.

Table 4
Park Ridge Community and Fire Department Demographic Comparison

	Female	Black	Other	Asian
Community	52%	<1%	<1%	3%
Fire Dept.	.01%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%

The most noted difference in the above table is the lack of female representation in the fire department as compared to the demographics of the community.

Another issue is the failure of the fire department to recognize and accept change. The fire department has been marked as "tradition bound" and tremendously resistant to innovation and change. At the root of this problem may be the lack of organizational diversity. New ideas, concepts and processes that a diverse, multicultural work force can add to an organization are absent. Complacency, tunnel vision and stagnation can result. The painstakingly slow move forward can only be increased and enhanced by the anticipation, acceptance and advancement of change.

This applied research project directly relates to two areas of the Executive Development course: Unit 4-Managing Creativity, and Unit 7-Organizational Culture.

This research relates specifically to Objective 2 of Unit 4-Managing Creativity.

- Objective 2: Determine what factors block or reduce individual and organizational creativity.

Cultural diversity in the workplace fosters and enhances organizational creativity. The lack of diversity can have the opposite effect. Higgins (1995, p. 64) argues that a diverse work force provides for new leadership and management styles, new management processes, new benefits, and new motivation systems.

This research also relates specifically to Objective 1 of Unit 7-Organizational Culture.

- Objective 1: Identify the characteristics of organizational culture.

A major characteristic of organizational culture is the diversity of both race and gender. Harrison and Shirom (1999, P. 251) believe that cognitive effects of diversity include the emergence of a wider range of perspectives (culture) and ideas during interaction, which in turn enhances innovation.

Finally, this research relates to one of the four United States Fire Administration (USFA) objectives. The USFA has established the following objective:

To promote within communities a comprehensive, multi-hazard risk reduction plan led by the fire service organization.

This applied research paper relates to this objective specifically due to the fact that this paper will demonstrate that culturally diverse organizations operate more effectively

than those with a lack of diversity. A comprehensive, multi-hazard risk reduction plan needs to be developed through collaborative and cohesive teamwork for it to be effective for the community it was designed for. This research paper and the literature review will illustrate that cohesive and effective teams require diversity of opinion and perspective, which becomes manifest through cultural diversity.

Literature Review

Workplace Diversity and Demographics

The ethnic, cultural, and gender characteristics of America's population and work force are rapidly changing. A large emigration of nonwhite ethnics from Asia, Southeast Asia, the Pacific Islands, Central and South America, the Caribbean, and West and East Africa is changing the face of our nation. The representation of these groups in the American "melting pot" is rising relative to Americans of European descent. It is estimated that nonwhite ethnic and cultural groups will exceed one-third of all new entrants into the labor force between now and the turn of the century (Work, 1996, p. 77).

Work (1996, p. 77) also states that dramatically increasing numbers of women are entering the work force in roles they would have been precluded from playing just a few decades ago. This is especially true in the fire service, having been tradition bound with a predominate workforce of white males for over a century. The white male dominated work force is no longer the norm, and the percentages of women and minorities in the workforce will continue to increase (Higgins, 1995, p. 6).

Diversity and Organizational Performance

There is a clear relationship between cultural diversity and organizational performance. Wall and Wall (1995, p. 185) state:

An organization that values diversity welcomes the input of people with different backgrounds, cultures, experiences, needs and strengths. Their input is not used to fulfill a government mandate or to placate a specific group of workers but to help the organization achieve its full potential and fulfill its fundamental purpose: to make a significant contribution to society in its areas of expertise.

The provision of the wide array of emergency services such as fire suppression, emergency medical service, specialized rescue, water rescue and hazardous material mitigation certainly require a contribution to society in these areas of expertise. Ostensibly a diverse workforce enhances expertise in these areas through different ideas and perspectives. Organizational effects of diversity include the emergence of a wider range of perspectives and ideas during interaction, which in turn can enhance innovation (Harrison and Shirom, 1995, p. 251).

Consequences of the Lack of Cultural Diversity

Bolman and Deal (1997, p. 349) state:

Institutional, structural and systemic issues are very difficult for members of dominant groups to understand. Systems are most often designed by dominant group members to meet their own needs. It is then difficult to see the ways in which our institutions and structures systematically exclude others who are not 'like us.' It is hard to see and question what we have always taken for granted and painful to confront personal complicity in maintaining the status quo.

Recruiting Diversity

Organizations must develop and maintain effective programs for attracting the recruitment and development of talent. People are the ultimate source of organizational

renewal (Coch and French, 1999). Talent can be found in a diverse workforce. “In attracting the best, keep in mind that top talent comes in all shapes, sizes, colors and ages. Diversity must be understood and embraced if organizations are to attract the best” (Smith and Kelly, 1997, p. 210).

Procedures

Limitations

Every fire department in the affluent suburbs located northwest of Chicago is struggling with this problem. I was unable to locate a comparable (demographics of the community, size, location) fire department with which to draw a meaningful comparison. I had hoped to locate a comparable department that had recruited and hired a culturally diverse workforce so I could evaluate the processes and procedures they utilized to accomplish this. Rather, I decided to focus on factors within my community and therefore specific to my department to evaluate the problem and come to a conclusion.

Process

The process I used in this research project was relatively straightforward. It began with research at the Learning Resource Center at the National Fire Academy to gather information about cultural diversity in the fire service as well as recruiting strategies. Unfortunately, much of the material was hypothetical in nature and didn't provide many actual implementation strategies. Armed with the information I gathered coupled with the data from the last Northwest Municipal Conference Firefighter Test Cycle, I utilized two problem refinement models to identify barriers to cultural diversity within my department. These two models are the Force Field Analysis and the Weighted

Alternatives Matrix. Results from both models are described in detail in the results section of this research paper.

Results

I will address each of the four research questions independently to illustrate the results of this research:

Question 1: What are the current methods utilized in the recruiting and hiring process?

As a result of this research I have found that the term recruiting is somewhat of a misnomer. The City of Park Ridge does not actively recruit anybody. As mentioned previously, the City of Park Ridge has elected to utilize the Northwest Municipal Conference Fire Fighter Testing Consortium for its fire fighter testing needs. The NWMC's recruiting efforts are nothing more than advertising fire fighter testing in several local area newspapers. They have, however, attempted to advertise in minority or ethnic based newspapers as illustrated in Table 5. This is the only attempt to "recruit" minorities.

Table 5
Question to Respondents “In which newspaper did you see our ad?”

<u>In which newspaper did you see our ad?</u>	<u>Number</u>
a. Bugle Newspaper	13
b. Chicago Sun Times	80
c. Chicago Tribune	69
d. Daily Herald	44
e. Chicago Defender	1
f. LaRaza	0
g. Lerner Life	5
h. Korean Times	1
i. Pioneer Press	5
j. Waukegan News	2
k. World Journal	0
l. College Newspaper	2
<u>m. Other</u>	<u>205</u>
Total	427

Question 2: Why haven't the current hiring methods resulted in the recruitment, hiring and retention of qualified minority applicants? What are the factors and barriers?

To answer this question, I utilized a problem refinement model known as a Force Field Analysis. Problem refinement involves investigation of factors that generally inhibit diversity and move to factors specific to Park Ridge.

Factors

- **Attitudes toward minority groups:**

Historical and cultural attitudes towards minority groups have created enormous barriers in accepting diversity. The use of stereotypes has created false expectations and erroneous assumptions of behavior from minorities.

- **Assumed superiority:**

Business, industry and government have typically been dominated by white males since the founding of this country. This has propagated the belief that minorities are less capable than other groups who have historically led and managed others in their professions.

- **Cultural differences:**

The vast differences in tradition and culture from the many ethnic groups is enormous. The failure to understand, accept and value these differences can be the most difficult barrier to cross.

- **Rumors of inferiority:**

The myth of inferior intellectual development of minorities may be explained by the false expectations learned as young children and reinforced throughout life. Minorities can themselves create barriers by withdrawing and accepting false expectations.

Specific factors affecting organizational diversity in the fire department:

- **Segregated housing:**

The City of Park Ridge is almost exclusively white with relatively inflated housing costs. The lack of diversity in the community may influence minorities from choosing to live and work in the community.

- **The recruitment/selection process:**

This process is extremely cumbersome, creating enormous obstacles for candidates. The physical agility test is very difficult for females to pass. Most candidates that are successful have previous emergency medical and fire

experience. The entire selection process is extremely difficult to complete and the majority of most applicants will not succeed.

- **Attitudes:**

The attitudes of local minorities and women towards working in a white male dominated organization affect the number of candidates showing interest in the career.

- **Local government:**

The mission of the local government does not include diversity. The Park Ridge Fire Department is not represented by minorities. A common attitude (based on interviews with management and labor) reveals that the lack of diversity is acceptable because "it represents the demographics of the community". If this were true, over one-half of the fire department would be comprised of female fire fighters.

To create a more organizationally diverse work force is no easy task. It seems apparent that the task at hand is to identify factors that directly affect the Park Ridge Fire Department. I have chosen the use of a "Force Field Analysis" to provide a logical and rational approach to selecting factors to address.

Explanation of Force Field Analysis

The force field analysis is a problem refinement model that uses a rational methodology for selecting alternatives. The analysis is divided into two components:

- **Driving Forces:**

Factors that tend to move an organization toward its goal.

- **Restraining Forces:**

Barriers to goal attainment.

In addition, each factor is "weighted" according to the following criteria:

- **Factors beyond organizational control**
- **Factors within control of the organization**
- **No control**

Theoretically, the path towards goal attainment is to increase the driving forces while removing barriers, and to act only on those factors within control of the organization.

Table 6**Force Field Analysis Summary****Driving Forces**

Attitudes (B)
 Minority Pressure (B)
 EEOC Guidelines (W)
 Affirmative Action (W)
 Integration (N)
 Demographic Trends (N)
 Organizational Trends (W)
 Awareness (W)
 Diminishing Work Force (N)

Restraining Forces

Attitudes (B)
 Prejudices (B)
 Discrimination (N)
 Resistance to Change (W)
 Segregation (N)
 Cultural Differences (N)
 Recruitment/Selection (W)
 Inferiority Complex (N)
 Assumed Superiority (N)

Factors Within Control

EEOC Guidelines
 Affirmative Action
 Awareness
 Resistance to Change
 Recruitment/Selection

Factors With No Control

Integration/Segregation
 Organizational Trends
 Work Force
 Discrimination
 Inferiority Complex
 Cultural Differences
 Assumed Superiority

Factors Beyond Control

Attitudes
 Minority Pressure
 Prejudices

In the previous analysis, the factors most likely to affect the organizational goals are:

- A proactive recruitment selection program
- An educational awareness program that addresses awareness and change management

Question 3: What new methods can be developed to increase cultural diversity with the Park Ridge Fire Department?

Numerous factors affecting diversity have previously been investigated. Several factors are clearly specific to the organization while others are more obscure and reflect cultural values and norms. The use of problem refinement as well as the Force Field Analysis determined that two factors are within the direct control of the organization. The other factors rely not only on society's willingness to accept change but on the individuals understanding and acceptance to modify behavior.

The above factors need to be addressed and the alternative solutions required to improve organizational diversity need to be assessed.

A Weighted Alternatives Matrix was be utilized to determine the best course of action. The following alternatives were chosen based on the Force Field Analysis and because they are the most concrete and measurable choices that are specific to our organization.

- **Status Quo:**

This was chosen not only as a control but more importantly because this is the course of action that the fire department will take without direct intervention.

- **Education and awareness:**

This alternative would be a formal and concentrated effort to educate the community, local government ,and fire department organization as to the short term and long term implications of a culturally non-diverse community. The objective would be to create a positive awareness of diversity with the intent to

both promote and implement programs designed to create a culturally diverse work force.

- **Recruitment/selection:**

This alternative would address a pro-active policy and program designed to specifically recruit and select minority employees. This alternative is visibly the most immediate and aggressive approach to the issue.

Weighted Alternatives Matrix

The Weighted Alternatives Matrix gives a value to factors that have important implications to our department. It also ranks these factors in relationship to one another. In other words, each implication is compared to each alternative. The perceived importance of each implication to the organization is given a value and compared to each alternative. The results of this comparison indicates the alternative that is most likely to produce a solution that is attainable and will provide the greatest benefit to the organization.

The following implications were chosen based on their relevance to the issue:

- Potentiality of attaining direct measurable results (5 pts)
- Probability of success (5 pts)
- Legal ramifications if alternative not chosen (4 pts)
- Ethical responsibility of the organization (1 pt)
- The propensity to overcome organizational resistance (3 pts)
- Improved public perception as a result of choosing the alternative (3 pts)
- Utility- the alternative that will produce the greatest benefit to the greatest number of people (5 pts)

- Perceived minority discrimination if not chosen (1 pt)
- Reversibility of alternative (2 pts)
- Cost of implementation (5 pts)

Table 7
Weighted Alternatives Matrix

IMPLICATION	WIEGHT	STATUS QUO		RECRUITMENT		EDUCATION	
		VALUE	TOTAL	VALUE	TOTAL	VALUE	TOTAL
DIRECT RESULTS	5	0	0	5	25	1	5
SUCCESS FACTOR	4	0	0	5	20	1	4
LEGALITY	5	0	0	5	25	2	10
ETHICS	2	0	0	4	8	1	2
RESISTANCE	2	0	0	1	2	5	10
PUBLIC PERCEPTION	1	0	0	4	4	3	3
UTILITY	5	0	0	5	25	2	10
NON-DISCRIMINATORY	2	0	0	5	10	3	6
REVERSABILITY	1	5	5	1	1	5	5
COST	4	0	0	4	16	3	12
TOTAL			5		216		68

Explanation of comparisons

- **Direct measurable results:**

- **Education:**

Can provide direct results however these will not be easily measured since this relies on the willingness and ability for individuals to experience behavioral change. Education and awareness is imperative to increase organizational diversity but direct results are usually unobtainable.

- **Status quo:**

Will not provide any results.

- **Recruitment/selection:**

Should provide immediate results measurable by the number of minorities beginning and completing the process.
- **Probability of success:**
 - **Education:**

Has a good likelihood for success but is more of a long term solution.
 - **Status quo:**

No chance for success.
 - **Recruitment/selection:**

Can be highly successful if the program is well designed and implemented.
- **Legal ramifications:**
 - **Education:**

Will demonstrate a rational approach to the problem but may not produce the results necessary to comply with future EEOC guidelines.
 - **Status quo:**

Has a high probability of creating legal problems.
 - **Legal ramifications:**

Directly address legal issues by developing an affirmative action plan.
- **Ethical responsibility:**
 - **Education:**

Demonstrates a reasonable and ethical effort towards diversity.

- **Status quo:**

Demonstrates a denial of any ethical responsibility.
- **Recruitment/selection:**

Also demonstrates a reasonable effort towards diversity.
- **Organizational change:**
 - **Education:**

Is vital to creating an environment for change.
 - **Status quo:**

Creates additional resistance.
 - **Recruitment/selection:**

Directly induces change within the organization by bringing diversity to the organization.
- **Public perception:**
 - **Education:**

Positively affects the public perception.
 - **Status quo:**

Creates or promotes tolerance of the present situation (breeds complacency).
 - **Recruitment/selection:**

May both improve public perception or decrease if education and awareness are not simultaneously employed.
- **Utility:**
 - **Education:**

Can provide benefit to many individuals long term.

- **Status quo:**

Provides benefit only to those individuals within the organization.
- **Recruitment/selection:**

Provides enormous benefit to many who can have the opportunity and choice to work in a culturally diverse organization.
- **Discrimination:**
 - **Education:**

Demonstrates an effort to not discriminate against minorities.
 - **Status quo:**

Clearly shows discrimination.
 - **Recruitment/selection:**

Takes a pro-active approach to discrimination issues.
- **Reversibility:**
 - **Education:**

Increased awareness of diversity can only provide positive benefits. If the program fails, no actual harm is done to the organization.
 - **Status quo:**

Not applicable.
 - **Recruitment/selection:**

Failure to adequately plan, organize and implement the program may produce legal ramifications.

- **Cost:**
 - **Education:**

Is relatively inexpensive based on the scope and depth of the program.
 - **Status quo:**

May ultimately cost the department due to lawsuits.
 - **Recruitment/selection:**

May produce high cost based on the involvement and commitment of the department.

Although the weighted alternatives matrix is somewhat subjective, it does provide a rational approach to selecting alternatives. This approach requires a clear understanding of the issue in order to analyze specific information to generate plausible alternatives.

The analysis, in this case, overwhelmingly indicates that the recruitment/selection process alternative will most likely produce the best overall results for the organization.

The rationale for this selection is as follows:

- Statistical evidence clearly indicates that the current selection process excludes minorities.
- Demographic studies indicate a shift in the present work force toward minorities.
- Current recruitment process attracts very few minorities to begin the process.
- Diverse organizations are generally more innovative and adapt to change more rapidly.
- The probability of attaining measurable results and achieve success are relatively high.

- The practicality of implementing the program.

Question 4: How can these new methods be implemented?

The City of Park Ridge must develop and implement a comprehensive, well-planned and proactive recruitment program to attract qualified minorities. Results of this research indicate that the candidate pool of minority applicants must be increased. The current method of utilizing the NWMC and advertising in newspapers is not attracting a sufficient amount of minority applicants. The City has no experience with recruiting and should consider contracting with a vendor qualified to develop a true recruitment program. I have researched vendors and have set a meeting with the Illinois Fire and Police Recruitment Administration for August 29th, 2002 to begin the development of a minority recruitment program.

Discussion

Research indicates that the face of America and the face of the American workforce is rapidly changing. It is estimated that nonwhite ethnic and cultural groups will exceed one-third of all new entrants into the labor force between now and the turn of the century (Work, 1996, p. 77). This prediction has indeed happened. In addition to these minorities, the amount of females entering jobs that they were once precluded from is rising dramatically (Work, 1996, p. 77). This is especially true of the fire service. The fire service has so long been dominated by the white male work force that it could be considered “hermetically sealed” and homogeneous. This is a problem because the white male dominated work force is no longer the norm, and the percentages of women and minorities in the work force will continue to increase (Higgins, 1995, p. 6).

This research also establishes a clear relationship between cultural diversity and organizational performance. Organizations that value diversity welcome the input of people with different backgrounds, cultures, experience, needs and strengths (Wall and Wall, 1995, p. 185).

The fire service has increasingly become “all things to all people” over the past three decades when it became clear that the public demanded more than its primary mission of fire suppression. No other occupation is so diverse or requires as much individualized expertise as the fire service. The provision of the wide array of emergency services such as fire suppression, emergency medical service, specialized rescue, water rescue and hazardous material mitigation certainly requires specialized training and knowledge in these areas of expertise. Ostensibly a diverse workforce enhances expertise in these areas through different ideas and perspectives. Organizational effects of diversity include the emergence of a wider range of perspectives and ideas during interaction, which in turn can enhance innovation (Harrison and Shirom, 1995, p. 251). The fire service has experienced an unparalleled investiture of innovation in the past decade with the introduction and implementation of new technology in firefighting equipment and emergency medical service equipment.

It is clear that there is a serious lack of diversity in the Park Ridge Fire Department. Conversely, it is also clear that diversity improves organizational performance (Wall and Wall, 1995) and offers tremendous benefits to the organization. It is critical that the Park Ridge Fire Department recognize this and develop strategies to improve the level of diversity within the department.

Organizations must develop and maintain effective programs for attracting the recruitment and development of talent. People are the ultimate source of organizational renewal (Coch and French, 1999). This is particularly important in a profession that is tradition-bound to a fault. The fire service is often referred to as a “stagnant” organization. Smith and Kelly (1997, p. 210) state that “In attracting the best, keep in mind that top talent comes in all shapes, sizes, colors and ages. Diversity must be understood and embraced if organizations are to attract the best.”

Recruitment of diversity has been a problem for the Park Ridge Fire Department. Current efforts of the Northwest Municipal Conference have not resulted in a substantial amount of minority candidates even participating in the first phases of the testing process, much less making the final eligibility list. Historically, fire departments have primarily relied upon word-of-mouth to recruit new firefighters. Word of mouth has worked well in attracting qualified applicants because firefighters “pre-screen” the applicants, telling only those whom they would like to see join the department (Booth, 1987, p. 49). However, Booth (1987, p. 49) points out the negative aspect of word-of-mouth recruiting by stating:

Unfortunately, when fire departments had primarily white-male work forces, word of mouth recruiting perpetuates the situation. A better strategy is needed if a department wants to increase the representation of these groups in its workforce.

Data from the November 2000 Northwest Municipal Conference Test Cycle supports Booth’s belief. When asked “how did you first learn of this test?” the majority of respondents selected “from a friend.”

Table 8
Respondents of Question “How did you learn of this test?”

a. notice mailed from consortium	88
b. from a friend	396
c. referred by a municipality	49
d. read a notice	62
e. newspaper ad	90
f. television	2
g. radio	0
h. internet	86
i. career fairs	15
j. other	3
Total	790

I also interviewed the local union president to solicit perceptions and opinions of the union on recruitment of minorities and received the following statement (6/1/02- Tim Norton, personal communication).

The union members do not have a problem in working with minorities. We do, however, have a problem with affirmative action practices. The person most qualified for the job should be given consideration. A person should not be hired based on the color of their skin or their sex. Affirmative action practices often result in reverse discrimination. The real problem is that no qualified female or minority applicants make it through the testing process, possibly because of the small number that actually show an interest in the job.

Recommendations

In conclusion, a well planned, comprehensive program of recruitment, testing, and selection of minority candidates is the most practical and rational approach to improving organizational diversity in the Park Ridge Fire Department. Other alternatives may have important long-term positive effects but are beyond the control of any organization. The

recruitment/selection process directly addresses the issue and will most likely produce the earliest, and most reliable results.

It is clear that demographic trends show a dramatic shift in the work force. The recruitment/selection process is a pro-active plan to prepare the organization for the present as well as the future. The concerted efforts of the Park Ridge Fire Department to immediately address the issue will pay long term benefits in the years to come. This will be a major progressive step for an organization that has been historically tradition bound.

The City of Park Ridge must develop and implement a comprehensive, well-planned and proactive recruitment program to attract qualified minorities. Results of this research indicate that the candidate pool of minority applicants must be increased. The current method of utilizing the NWMC and advertising in newspapers is not attracting a sufficient amount of minority applicants. The City has no experience with recruiting and should consider contracting with a vendor qualified to develop a true recruitment program. I have researched vendors and have set a meeting with the Illinois Fire and Police Recruitment Administration for August 29th, 2002 to begin the development of a minority recruitment program.

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