

**RECRUITING A DIVERSE WORK FORCE
AN EVALUATION OF THE GRAND RAPIDS FIRE DEPARTMENT
RECRUITMENT TASK FORCE**

STRATEGIC MANAGEMENT OF CHANGE

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ABSTRACT

Recruiting women and minorities for the position of firefighter has always been most challenging for the fire service. It has been especially challenging for the Grand Rapids Fire Department. Since 1990, the Grand Rapids Fire Department has hired 129 firefighters of which included only one women (.7%) and five minorities (3.8%). The City of Grand Rapids and the Grand Rapids Fire Department are committed to maintaining a diverse work force that represents the community it serves.

The purpose of this applied research project was to evaluate the performance of the Recruitment Task Force that was established to improve the recruitment of qualified women and minorities testing for the position of firefighter.

The results of a historical and evaluative research of current literature and a survey instrument of comparable fire departments was used to evaluate the effectiveness of the Recruitment Task Force in their effort to increase the number of women and minorities testing for the position of firefighter.

Research questions posed by this applied research project were:

1. Is managing a diverse work force important in the public sector?
2. Was the Task Force necessary?
3. What current recruitment strategies are others using in an attempt to obtain a diverse work force?
4. What hiring instruments are fire departments using in their hiring process?
5. How can the effectiveness of the Task Force be elevated?

The literature stressed the advantages and importance of obtaining a diverse work force. It also revealed organizations including the Grand Rapids Fire Department are

utilizing many of the strategies necessary in an attempt to be successful at attracting women and minorities into the fire service.

The survey instrument also verified that the Task force used many of the strategies used by other fire departments for successful recruiting. It also revealed that many departments are struggling with the challenge of maintaining diverse work force.

There were six recommendations based on the results to improve the program and impact the overall effectiveness of the Recruitment Task Force.

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INTRODUCTION

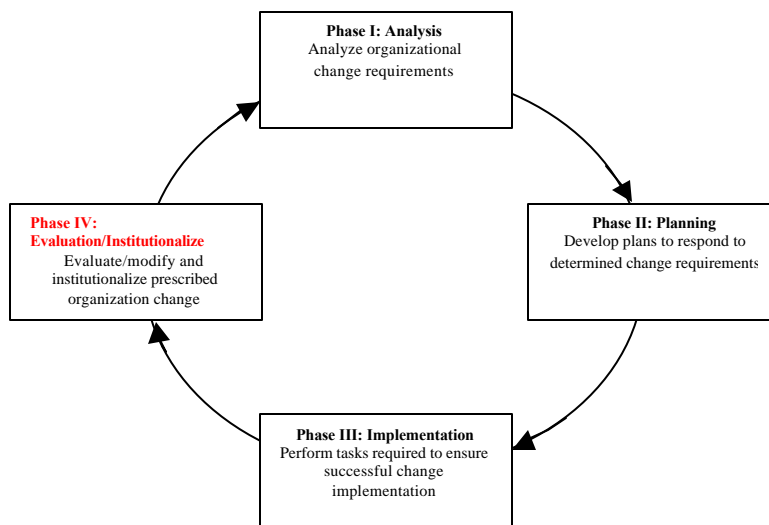
In June of 1972, a class action was filed in the United States District Court for the Western District of Michigan, Southern Division, alleging the methods used by the Grand Rapids Fire Department for recruiting, testing, and selection of candidates for the position of firefighter were discriminatory. The outcome was in January of 1973; the parties, which provided for an Equal Opportunity Program implemented within the Fire Department, executed a “consent decree”. This was the beginning of a transformational change in hiring practices for the Grand Rapids Fire Department.

Since the 1972 class action, The Grand Rapids Fire Department has struggled as many other fire departments to recruit a diverse work force. The Grand Rapids Fire Department has always been a predominately white male department. The entire department was white male until 1951 when the first black firefighter was hired. The first women entered the department in 1984.

In 1996 the City of Grand Rapids Fire Department Recruitment Task Force formed. The Task Force comprised of a diverse group of members from all cultures and ranks from the department and the Human Resource department. Their overall goal being to improve recruitment of qualified woman and minorities for the position of firefighter.

The purpose of this research is to evaluate the performance of the Recruitment Task Force by various techniques and applying them to Phase Four (Evaluation/Institutionalism) of the Change Management Model (CMM). This model was presented in the “Strategic Management of Change” course at the National Fire Academy. (Figure 1).

Figure 1. Change Management Model (Federal Emergency Management Agency [FEMA], 1996, p. SM C-2)



The historical and evaluative research methodology was used to analyze literature, assess if the program has been effective, and propose recommendations if needed.

The following research questions were posed.

1. Is managing a diverse work force important in the public sector?
2. Was the Task Force necessary?
3. What current recruiting strategies are others using to obtain a diverse work force?
4. What hiring instruments are fire departments using in the hiring process?
5. How can the effectiveness of the Task Force be evaluated?

BACKGROUND AND SIGNIFICANCE

Grand Rapids Fire Department

The City of Grand Rapids is the second largest city in the State of Michigan. In 1952, the City covered twenty-three square miles and had a resident population of 176,000. In 1999, it has grown to cover forty-eight square miles and the resident population has increased to 194,000.

In 1999, the Grand Rapids Fire Department operated twelve engines companies, four ladder companies, one rescue squad, one hazardous materials response unit, four pieces of river rescue response equipment, confined space and heavy rescue equipment, and two duty battalion chiefs. The Department has 234 uniformed members. The Grand Rapids Fire Department conducts an annual seventeen-week firefighter recruit class.

History

In June of 1972, in the United States District Court for the Western District of Michigan, Southern Division a class action suit was filed. The suit alleged the methods for recruiting, testing, and selection of candidates for the position of firefighter was discriminating. Pursuant to a consent decree dated January 19, 1974, the Court issued an Order requiring the City to implement proposals contained within its equal employment opportunity program for the Grand Rapids Fire Department. The consent decree also called for the utilization of a new testing instrument and included a dual eligibility (minority/white) list, which was effective in hiring minorities (Annual Report on Affirmative Action and Equal Opportunity, 1996).

In January of 1973, there were three minority persons in the Grand Rapids Fire Department with 141 allocated firefighter positions. The goal in the consent decree was to increase the minority representation to approximately fourteen- percent, or 23 minority persons. Because the consent decree allowed for the use of separate eligibility lists, the City of Grand

Rapids was, in fact, able to accomplish this goal within the first two years (Annual Report on Affirmative Action and Equal Opportunity, 1996).

In 1973, the hiring process was composed of only a written test. The candidates were placed on an eligibility list based strictly on their test score. The hiring process remained constant with the only changes in 1985 when a “physical agility” test was added to the process. There also were changes in the type of lists and tests over the years.

The process begins with the written test. The top candidates from the written test are then eligible for the physical agility test. If they pass the agility test, they proceed to an oral interview.

In June of 1984, the City of Grand Rapids employed 120 firefighters, of which 24 were minorities. The 24 minorities were more than the 23 contemplated by the decree. The 20% minority representation was also well above the 14% contemplated in the document, and greater than the 17.4% goal set by the City of Grand Rapids in its overall Affirmative Action Plan (Annual Report on Affirmative Action and Equal Opportunity, 1986).

The use of the 1973 consent decree for hiring firefighters presented both benefits and problems. The primary benefits were that the City of Grand Rapids affirmative action goals for minority firefighters were exceeded. In addition, an examination was in place, which was approved by the Court, and a dual eligibility list system (minority, white) was in place for selecting firefighters.

Several problems were also presented by the City of Grand Rapids as they continued the use of the consent decree. First, the Courts in recent years had clearly stated that consent decrees and affirmative action programs were to be used as temporary measures, carefully tailored to remedy the imbalance caused by unintentional or intentional discrimination. Such decrees and

programs may not, according to the Courts, be used to maintain or exceed affirmative action goals.

Second, the consent decree dictated the entire selection process. That is, it required a specific written examination to be used for the purpose of ranking applicants on either white or minority lists. While the consent decree was in place, the City of Grand Rapids did not have the ability to develop testing criteria, which may have been more appropriate for selecting firefighters in the future.

Third, the City of Grand Rapids was beginning to actively work on affirmative action goals for female firefighters, established in The City of Grand Rapids 1977 Affirmative Action Plan. At that time, there were no female firefighters in the department. As long as the consent decree remained in effect, it would have hampered making progress in reaching its goals for women firefighters.

In June of 1984, a decision was made by city administrators to immediately dissolve the consent decree on the basis that the City of Grand Rapids had substantially complied with the provisions of the order. It was also decided to establish a two-roster eligibility list system for the firefighter position, consisting of a male roster and a female roster. Minorities and non-minorities alike would be placed on one of the two rosters based on gender. This system would be temporary until the goal for female firefighters was reached, or five years, whichever was first (Annual Report on Affirmative Action and Equal Opportunity, 1986).

In 1985, there were two recruit classes; one class included six females and the other five, using the dual male/female lists. In addition, the "Physical Agility" testing began that year. This test consists of eight job-related tasks that test physical strength and endurance. In 1986 through 1989, there was only one recruit class.

In 1990, with all goals achieved for women and minority firefighters, the dual list system was abandoned and a return to one list for all applicants for the position of firefighter.

The Recruitment Task Force

After returning to one list for all applicants for the position of firefighter, 1990 through 1995, only one female and two minority firefighters were hired. The number of firefighters continued to be depleted as minorities and females were being promoted out of the firefighter classification.

After the 1995 recruit class graduated, the fire chief felt it was necessary to look ahead to future Recruit Classes to enhance, and improve the recruitment of women and minorities into the department. In lieu of returning to dual lists or other means of “leveling the playing field”, it was recommended to form the Firefighter Recruitment Task Force to attract viable minority and female applicants to firefighter positions.

The initial analysis and planning phases (Phases I and II in Figure 1) began in November of 1996, volunteers were sought from all ranks of the Grand Rapids Fire Department to serve on the Recruitment Task Force. The Task Force was scheduled to work collaboratively with the City’s Equal Opportunity and Human Resource Departments, the YWCA Women’s Resource Center, and local ethnic associations in developing strategies and approaches. The overall goal being to better recruit women and minority candidates into the Grand Rapids Fire Department (1997 Annual Affirmative Action Report)

In March of 1996, a Recruitment Task Force “Retreat” was held. The City Manager and other prominent city officials were present to stress the importance of a diverse work force. A guest speaker discussed obstacles to recruiting successful minority and women candidates. The goals and objectives were formulated during this Retreat.

The Grand Rapids Fire Department Recruitment Task Force has gone through only the first three phases (Figure 1) of the CMM. The change management approach has never been evaluated for its effectiveness, institutionalizing its successes, or modifying its weaknesses as prescribed in Phase IV of the CMM.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The evaluation of the Grand Rapids Fire Department Recruitment Task Force began with reviewing literature of numerous books, periodicals, reports, and manuals. The research concentrated in four areas: (a) diversity, its challenges and importance to organizations; (b) recruiting target groups and what strategies are most successful; (c) hiring instruments; and (d) change management and its evaluation.

Diversity In The Public Sector

While many observers felt affirmative action was simply a political stage that America needed to transit on its way to accepting increased cultural and, therefore, work force diversity. Any dating of the decisive step toward full diversity at the federal level must be arbitrary, but 1978 constitutes a fair approximation. (Golembiewski, 1995).

Golembiewski (1995, p. 1) states “Diversity” will (and should) be interpreted in very broad terms. He goes on to say that diversity now clearly encompasses only race, and only after centuries of escalating consciousness; and some would prefer to restrict diversity only to race. Recent decades also have seen advances by advocates of gender.

Others define work force diversity simply as recognizing, appreciating, valuing and utilizing the unique talents and contributions of all individuals (Grow, D. & Knox, C. 1995).

Basically, diversity deals with the issue of how we want our organizations to look. Illustratively, President Clinton promised that his administration’s appointees “would look like

America,” that is, they would be more diverse than typical panels of appointees (Golembiewski, 1995).

The labor force is changing and the stereotypes of hiring only white males under forty are disappearing due to the group getting smaller in size. As the labor force changes, employers are facing new challenges and opportunities. Proactive employers are taking advantage of these changes by targeting the new diverse groups in the work force. Women have been a major factor for years in the labor force as their responsibilities have increased (Wendover, 1996).

Diversity will pose major challenges over the coming decades. The ante is being raised steadily and at times spectacularly as to what constitutes caring and competent public service, and much of the related dynamics can be attributed to the long-blunted desire for recognition of various diversities. With the group of white males under forty shrinking and the targeting of new diverse work groups, tomorrows organizations will be more demographically diverse. They will become more demographically diverse because around the year 2000, more or less, 80 to 85 percent of the new entrants into the job markets will be women, people of color, or recent immigrants from non-European settings. This alone will make organizations go far beyond today’s standards-whether kicking or screaming or as the result of effective planning, or somewhere in between (Golembiewski, 1995).

While discrimination and bias are widely prohibited, it is still very much in practice throughout the nation. Employers that are continually successful in hiring and retaining the best, use diversities to their advantage rather than discriminating against them. An organization’s ability to adjust to the changing work force, and take advantage of their interests and experience and work ethic will serve to strengthen not only the organization, it will also strengthen their standing within the community (Wendover, 1996).

With discrimination still in practice, we must remember that constitutionally, basic U.S. political institutions are built on a foundation of the protection of minority rights, and diversity contributes a major defense against a coercive coalition. Among numerous others, James Madison emphasizes this crucial point in *Federalist 10*, as he explains how our pluralist model helps guarantee our rights via the interplay of “factions”. Even our money proudly proclaims: “E pluribus Unum,” which translates loosely as “One formed out of many” (Golembiewski, 1995).

Underestimating the importance of a diverse work force or failing to manage diversity will have high costs. The following is a list of formidable competitive advantages available to organizations, which deal with diversity quickly and efficiently:

- Reduce the costs associated with high turnover and absenteeism, both among the new entrants as well as the traditional employees who may otherwise feel threatened by new diversity.
- Ease the burdens of recruiting scarce labor.
- Reduce court and litigation costs.
- Improve the position of minorities by creating a more positive image with minorities who are customers.
- Reduce intergroup conflict at work and ideally transform that energy into greater innovation and heightened performance.
- Lower or eliminate barriers to communications, with probable improvements in problem-solving and almost certain reductions in wasted energy (Golembiewski, 1995).

Others tie greater efficiency and effectiveness to full-fledged diversity efforts, resulting from broader perspectives, greater innovation, and a deeper pool of talent. Thus, diversity

properly understood, as a respect for all individual differences will be accepted with less conflict than quotas and set-asides. It will be accepted more on the basic presumption that cultural differences are both broader and less emotionally loaded than racial or gender differences (Golembiewski, 1995).

Grand Rapids Fire Department Efforts For Recruiting Target Groups

No fire department can function or survive without adequate staffing. Recruitment is the process of attracting and evaluating potential candidates for the department. It includes all steps in the hiring process, beginning with advertising, (both formal and informal), application, testing, and selection (Marinucci, 1995)

Selection and identifying target groups is one of the first steps of the hiring process. Having a diverse work force enhances your service to the community because they give you a better perspective of the citizens you are trying to serve.

The efforts of the City of Grand Rapids for hiring target groups worked well under Affirmative Action during the period from 1974 to 1985. In 1973, the department consisted of 275 personnel (including office staff) of which 268 (97.4 %) were non-minority males and females. There were no females or Hispanics in the fire suppression forces. In 1986, there were 265 personnel of which 230 (86.7 %) were non-minority males and females. The minority and female percentage rose from 2.6% in 1973 to just over 13.0% of the work force (see Table 1) (Grand Rapids Equal Opportunity, 1986).

Table 1

1986 Work force Analysis						
Female	White	Black	Hispanic	Asian	Native American	Total
	13	1	1	0	0	15
Percent of work force	4.91%	0.38%	0.38%	0%	0%	5.67%
Male	White	Black	Hispanic	Asian	Native American	Total
	229	11	6	0	4	250
Percent of work force	86.42%	4.15%	2.26%	0	1.51%	94.33%
Source: City of Grand Rapids Equal Opportunity Report, 1986						

From December 1986 through December 1993, four female and 14 minority male firefighters entered the department, while the work force was lowered to 263. This brought the minority and female representation to 20.5% of the work force, up over 7% in the seven -year period. This represents a substantial increase since 1973 however, the research showed 1994 to December of 1996, thirty-five firefighters were hired and only one female and no minority males were hired (2.8%) (Annual Report on Affirmative Action and Equal Opportunity, 1996).

In 1990 when one list for all applicants again went into affect, through 1995, before the Recruitment Task Force formed, 88 firefighters were hired of which 1 female and 2 minorities (3.4%) were hired. With this dramatic decrease in the number of women and minority firefighters being hired, Equal Opportunity recommended the fire chief form a Firefighter

Recruitment Task Force.

In November of 1995 during the planning and implementation phases, the fire chief distributed a memorandum requesting volunteers for the Task Force. The memorandum spoke to the time being good to enhance and improve on the departments' recruitment of women and minorities. The memorandum produced a diverse group of 14 volunteers for the Recruitment Task Force.

In March of 1996, top management held a Recruitment Task Force "Retreat". The following goals and objective were developed:

1. Develop/organize a list of interested persons from the Task Force to participate on three member teams to attend different public recruitment activities.
2. Develop sections for targeted recruiting such as churches and contacts with ethnic groups.
3. Create Candidate Information Center.
4. Create recruitment material such as display boards, videos, and brochures.

The Task Force was functioning and developed its goals and objectives in time for the 1996 recruiting process. Members began attending job fairs, ethnic events, and designing a recruiting brochure. A team was also assigned to make a Grand Rapids Fire Department recruitment video.

Equal Opportunity Department statistics showed that in 1995, 752 applicants took the exam for the position of firefighter. White males accounted for 614 or 81.64% (See Table 3) of the applicants. Minorities and women accounted for the remaining 129 or over 17%.

Table 2

1995 Applicant Flow Information For The Position of Firefighter							
Sex	White	Black	Hispanic	Asian	Native Am	Unknown	Total
Male	614	50	20	2	11	9	706
Percent	81.64%	6.65%	2.65%	0.26%	1.46%	1.19%	93.85%
Female	34	6	5	0	1	0	46
Percent	4.52%	0.79%	0.66%	0.00%	0.13%	0.00%	6.10%
Total	648	56	25	2	12	9	752

Source: (Annual Report on Affirmative Action and Equal Opportunity, 1996).
Does not equal 100% due to rounding

The 1996 testing for the firefighter position was the first year of statistics that showed the efforts of the Recruitment Task Force. There were 880 applicants that tested for the position of firefighter. Of the 880 applicants that tested, 621 (70.56%) were white males (See Table 3).

The women and minority representation jumped from 17% to just over 28% (Annual Report on Affirmative Action and Equal Opportunity, 1999).

Table 3

1996 Applicant Flow Information For The Position of Firefighter							
Sex	White	Black	Hispanic	Asian	Native Am	Unknown	Total
Male	621	115	24	5	19	10	794
Percent	70.56%	13.06%	2.72%	0.56%	2.15%	1.13%	90.18%
Female	54	27	2	0	2	1	86
Percent	6.13%	3.06%	0.22%	0.00%	0.22%	0.11%	9.74%
Total	675	142	26	5	21	11	880

Source: (Annual Report on Affirmative Action and Equal Opportunity, 1997).
Does not equal 100% due to rounding

In 1997 the number of applicants dropped along with percentages for women and minorities (See Table 4). The percentage of white males taking the test rose by over 7%.

Table 4

1997 Applicant Flow Information For The Position of Firefighter							
Sex	White	Black	Hispanic	Asian	Native Am	Unknown	Total
Male	424	47	23	3	10	0	507
Percent	77.80%	8.62%	4.22%	0.55%	1.83%	0.00%	93.02%
Female	34	4	0	0	0	0	38
Percent	6.24%	0.73%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	6.97%
Total	458	51	23	3	10	0	545

Source: (Annual Report on Affirmative Action and Equal Opportunity, 1998).
Does not equal 100% due to rounding

In 1998 the applicant flow remained constant from 1997. The number of applicants rose however, the percentages remained very close to 1997 (See Table 5).

Table 5

1998 Applicant Flow Information For The Position of Firefighter							
Sex	White	Black	Hispanic	Asian	Native Am	Unknown	Total
Male	511	56	25	4	9	1	606
Percent	77.54%	8.49%	3.79%	0.61%	1.36%	0.15%	91.94%
Female	43	7	2	0	1	0	53
Percent	6.52%	1.06%	0.30%	0.00%	0.15%	0.00%	8.03%
Total	554	63	27	4	10	1	659

Source: (Annual Report on Affirmative Action and Equal Opportunity, 1999).
Does not equal 100% due to rounding

During the period from 1996 through the recruit class of 1999, 41 firefighters were hired. Of the 41, three minorities (7.3%) were hired and the trend of no females continued (Annual Report on Affirmative Action and Equal Opportunity, 1999).

Recruitment Strategies

A metropolitan fire department and a neighboring municipal fire department conducted independent but simultaneous efforts for recruiting women and minorities for firefighters. The metropolitan department recruited 353 applicants; whereas, the municipal department recruited six applicants. Both departments were offering jobs that paid the same and offered similar benefits, why was one so much more successful than the other? The answer lies in the amount of time spent and the strategies used to market the fire department (McMullen & Terry, 1990)

The number of strategies to reach target groups can be enormous. While image is a consideration, organizations are finding that aggressive marketing strategies are the keys to recruitment (Wendover, 1996). Here are some proven strategies for reaching the people you want (pg. 217):

- Billboards and busses both private and public have caught on as an effective form of advertising since people are spending more time in their cars.
- Career fairs can be used to fill current openings but more important for promoting your organization to various labor pools.
- Internet postings on the World Wide Web can reach millions of people at once and can be updated quickly and inexpensively.
- Job fairs are an excellent way to showcase opportunities within an organization. They are generally aimed at specific target groups.
- Open houses play to the public's curiosity about your organization. You can take advantage of this by opening your doors and conducting interesting tours.
- Brochures promoting job opportunities can be distributed to employees and from strategic locations for potential job applicants.

- Videos promoting the organization and discussing conditions, opportunities, and expectations (Wendover, 1996).

Some of the strategies for recruiting employees can be costly. Employers must ask themselves “how much does it cost for you to hire someone”? The cost of hiring for the various levels of employees will vary. The cost should include the cost of replacement, the additional training and staff commitment, and the lost work on the job. Seeing these expenses proves to be an effective motivator for examining your recruiting budget. A recruiting budget is critical to being effective in your recruiting strategies and shows commitment of the organization (Wendover, 1996).

In the book *Recruitment and Retention in the Volunteer Fire Service*, Bush and Schaenman and Theil (1998) name some strategies for the effective recruitment of females and minorities. They include having female and minority firefighters speak to possible recruits; clear written policies on harassment and discrimination; pictures of female and minority firefighters in recruitment flyers; and by word of mouth. They went on to name some strategies for Hispanics which included having recruiting messages in Spanish and English, and advertise in Hispanic papers or other media.

One of the most effective recruiting strategies is to involve fire agency personnel in recruitment activities. This strategy is generally effective because of the firefighters professional interest and fire personnel recruit better-qualified candidates (ICMA, 1988).

Organizations can develop innovative strategies to market their department. These strategies take commitment on the part of the organization and are generally long-term. The results can be phenomenal if they are carried out with enthusiasm and follow-through (Wendover, 1996).

These strategies include developing better relations with local schools. The overall goal is to improve applicant skills and attract attention to your organization. Another innovative strategy is to initiate an internship program. Thousands of organizations across the United States conduct internship programs in conjunction with local colleges. The advantage for the organization include training and development of a high performing employee after graduation (Wendover, 1996).

Recruiting strategies designed to make a fire agency more diverse or representative in manpower policies are best adapted to the particular characteristics of the department, the governmental jurisdiction, and the community it serves. Any strategy is useless unless a sincere and sustained public commitment is made on the part of fire chiefs, with a total commitment of their superiors, to the department's active involvement in being a practicing equal opportunity employer (ICMA, 1979)

Hiring Instruments

Pre-employment testing has been, and will continue to be, a controversial issue. While testing has become a valid method for ascertaining a candidate's suitability for employment, legal implications concerning discrimination still surround the topic.

Fire departments across the country use a variety of means for their pre-employment process. These means range from physical agility testing to written testing or a combination.

This paper will list five areas that may be used in the pre-employment process.

- Intelligence testing is really a test of learning ability, particularly the ability to learn with printed material.
- Aptitude testing attempts to determine what a candidate may be able to do.
- Achievement testing determines the degree of knowledge in specific fields.

- Personality tests attempt to assess applicants in terms of “traits”.
- Honesty tests, or “integrity tests”, are designed to determine the integrity of people who take them by measuring attitudes toward dishonesty and propensity for theft-type behavior (Johnson, 1995).

Under the Civil Rights Act of 1964, employers may use any professionally developed ability test provided they are reliable and are not used as a basis of discrimination. The reliability of a specific measuring instrument is critical when evaluating them for evidence of potential bias. Reliability concerns the consistency of measurement. When we measure the same thing twice, we obtain the same result. Of particular concern is whether selection tests and job-performance measures demonstrate consistency (Arvey & Faley, 1988).

If testing is part of the hiring process, it must be conducted for each position open every time. Testing policies that enable the fire chief to test on some occasions and not on others are capricious, discriminatory, and illegal (Grant & Hoover, 1994).

It is important to note the different types of testing instruments available. The methods used obviously will affect the hiring process. For instance, the use of an agility performance test could affect the number of females that enter the department.

Change Management

In Order for fire departments to meet challenges brought about by these dynamic times, members must be able to manage and facilitate changes that occur in their organizations and in their lives. Change does not wait for organizations or individuals to get ready; and progress will not stop because one fire department lacks the skills. Traditional roles and responsibilities will be updated in order to facilitate these changes occurring within the industry and their agencies (FEMA 1996).

Cultural diversity and shifting social values are providing changes and challenges in the fire service. Historically a white male-dominated occupation, the influx of women and minorities into the profession is forcing departments to reevaluate and modify their recruiting and selection procedures, organizational policies, and building layouts (FEMA 1996).

To ensure the success of a change effort, leaders must adopt certain characteristics. They must be a “communicator”, which includes open communications and being a good listener. During the change effort they must keep everyone informed of the process, recognize others concerns, and diffuse rumors against the change (FEMA 1996).

One of the most important characteristics is being an “educator”. Educating everybody about the purpose, reasons, and effects of the change promotes an understanding of the larger picture (FEMA 1996).

In organizations you will have members that never resist change and always expect it or even embrace it. But to embrace change without regard to its nature—without asking “for what, to what?”—is to renounce your judgement, your preferences, even your status as a moral being. “Change” has no ethic and no aesthetic. The only thing to say about change is it is the raw difference between yesterday and today, today and tomorrow (Gorden, 1998).

Once a change management plan is implemented, it must be continuously and systematically monitored to see if it is working and meeting anticipated goals. To determine if a change management approach is successful is determined by evaluating the effects of the implementation against the goals and objectives set out in the change plan. If during the evaluation process it is determined the plan is not working as anticipated; the approach must be adjusted (FEMA, 1996)

There are a number of different methodologies for managing transformational change. While there is a great degree of variability among the models, they all attempt to identify essential factors for managing transformational change. In the CMM (FEMA, 1996), these factors are referred to as change agents, change methods, or change objects. These factors must all be transformed in order for the change management plan to be successful (Cole, 1998).

The literature review proved how promoting a diverse work force is very important. It further proved there are many advantages to maintaining such a work force. The review of literature of the hiring history of the Grand Rapids Fire Department also was valuable by pointing out that under affirmative action years the hiring of women and minorities was effective. However, it produced rationale as to why additional efforts were necessary in order to remain effective. The review continued on to list the effective strategies of recruiting and the importance of commitment from the organizational leaders. The literature review concluded with change management skills and a methodology to evaluate the Recruitment Task Force.

PROCEDURES

The research was conducted following the Change Management Model (CCM) for the “Strategic Management of Change” course at the National Fire Academy.

The research procedures used in preparing this paper began with a literature review at the Learning Resource Center (LRC) at the National Emergency Training Center (NETC) in January of 1999. Additional reviews were conducted at the Grand Rapids and Grand Haven public libraries in Grand Rapids and Grand Haven, Michigan. The review also included gathering inter-department memorandums and recorded minutes from actual meetings.

The literature focused in four areas. The first area was limited to diversity and its challenges and importance to organizations. The next area was about recruiting target groups and

the current strategies that have been successful. The last area was on change management and its evaluation.

A survey instrument was then developed. The survey instrument, called “Applied Research Project Survey” (Appendix A), was sent to 72 fire departments across North America that were similar in size (200 or more members). The information was then entered into an Excel spreadsheet. The purpose of the survey was to gather and compile information and opinions from other departments relating to their missions, recruiting, and hiring practices.

The survey consisted of 12 questions. The purpose of questions 1-3 was to gather information about their departments and missions. Questions 3-6 gathered information on recruiting practices. Questions 7-10 gathered information on testing procedures for entrance firefighters. Questions 11 and 12 gathered information about Equal Opportunity and if their fire department represented the demographics of their City.

The final phase of the CMM consists of three evaluation tasks (FEMA 1998)

1. Evaluate initial change implementation.
2. Alter/modify change management approach.
3. Continue to monitor and institutionalize change implementation.

This model was used for evaluating the “Recruitment Task Force”. To address the first task, books, manuals, department memorandums, meeting minutes and publications on diversity and recruitment were reviewed. The literature was obtained from the City of Grand Rapids Human Resources Department as well as from the Learning Resource Center at the National Fire Academy in Emmitsburg, Maryland. Literature on diversity and recruiting also were examined from the public libraries in Grand Rapids (MI) and Grand Haven (MI). The books and publications were relevant and much information was gathered.

The second and third tasks of the CMM were addressed by using the findings of the literature review and the survey to develop recommendations for altering the change management approach of the program.

Assumptions and Limitations

As with all surveys, it was assumed all respondents would answer the survey honestly and were in a position within their organization to have the appropriate knowledge for answering each question. This assumption appears to have been flawed. Some of the surveys were returned with only the front questions answered. In addition, some surveys were returned with questions left blank. The survey instrument was sent out to 72 departments, and only 58 of 72 (80.5%) returned.

The survey was non-random. The population sampled was not representative of the fire service in the United States. It was sent to professional fire departments from metropolitan cities and countries. However, it was important to use departments similar in size.

The author did attempt to gather available information on the Recruitment Task Force. The only information gathered was the original department memorandum requesting volunteers and minutes from meetings. The minutes from the initial meeting did include the goals and objectives for the Recruitment Task Force, however the overall information was limited.

RESULTS

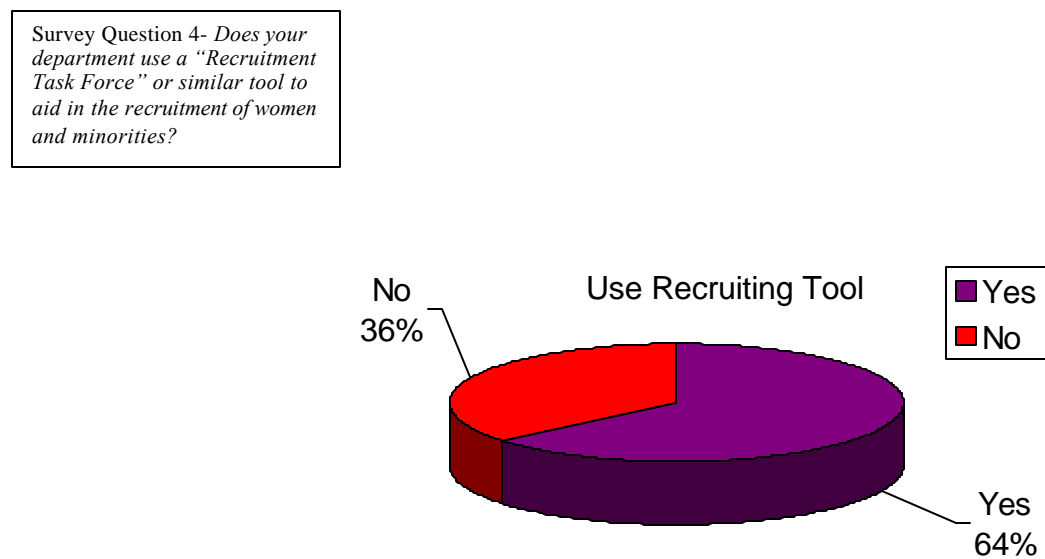
The results of the research paper are accumulative in nature and represents a comprehensive study of all the material used. The author attempted to answer the original five research questions as accurately and thoroughly as possible to accomplish the primary objective for the paper.

The first research question asked “Is managing a diverse work force important in the public sector?”

The literature review listed numerous advantages of managing diversity in the public sector. They included avoiding high litigation costs as well as adverse judgements by the courts. Others advantages include lowering the overall costs of doing business, communications will be less difficult, and employee involvement will be increased to name a few. (Golembiewski, 1995).

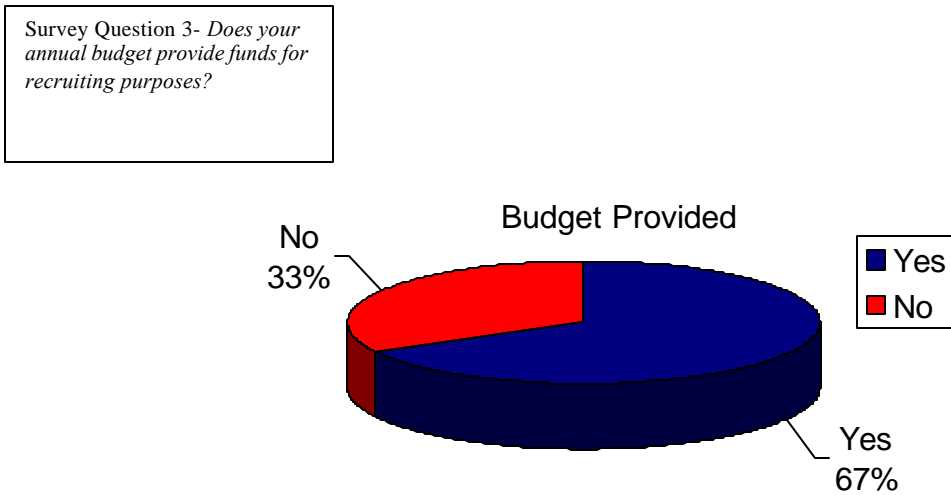
Question 4 on the survey instrument revealed 37 of 58 (64 %) used a “Recruitment Task Force” or a similar tool to aid in the recruitment of women and minorities (see Figure 2).

Figure 2



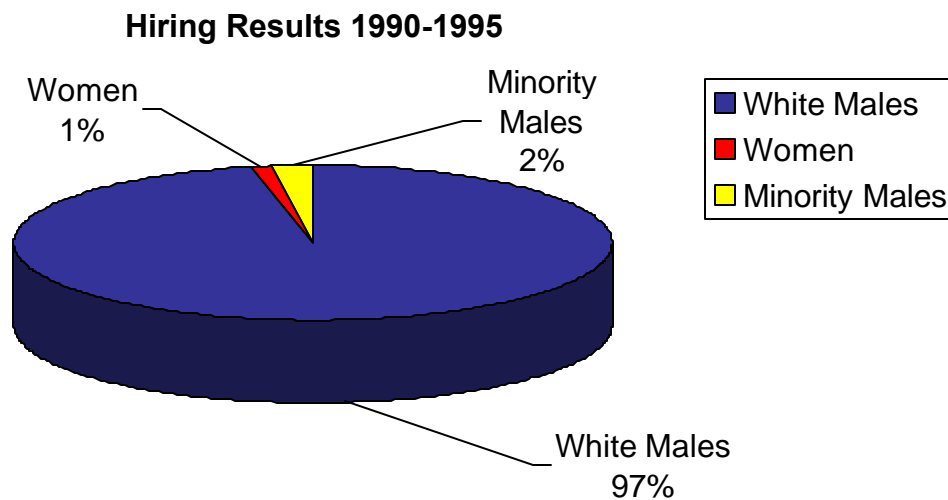
The survey also indicated 39 of 58 (67 %) felt managing a diverse work force a priority and included monies for recruiting purposes (see Figure 3).

Figure 3



The second research question addressed “Was the Task Force necessary?”

The literature review revealed during affirmative actions years, the hiring of minorities and women into the Grand Rapids Fire Department was effective. In 1990, it was decided to return to one list for all applicants. From 1990 through December 1995, 88 firefighters were hired with one female and two minorities (see Figure 4).



The research revealed why the Task Force was necessary. The City of Grand Rapids' commitment to a diverse work force did not change. Yet of 88 firefighters hired in the five-year period, only three were women and minorities. City officials recognized the need for some type of action to address the need to maintain a diverse fire department.

This type of action to address diversity issues would be accepted with less conflict than quotas or dual and separate lists used in the past. This action will be accepted more on the basic presumption that cultural differences are both broader and less emotionally loaded than racial or gender differences (Golembiewski, 1995).

The third research question addressed "What current recruiting strategies are being used in an attempt to obtain a diverse work force?"

The attitude and culturalization of new work force entrants are becoming significantly different. The white male entrant into the work force is becoming the minority. This affects language work ethic and social barriers with which employers will have to deal with. These attitudes combined with an abundance of jobs and a shortage of workers, will enable job candidates to become more choosy about the positions they take (Wendover, 1996).

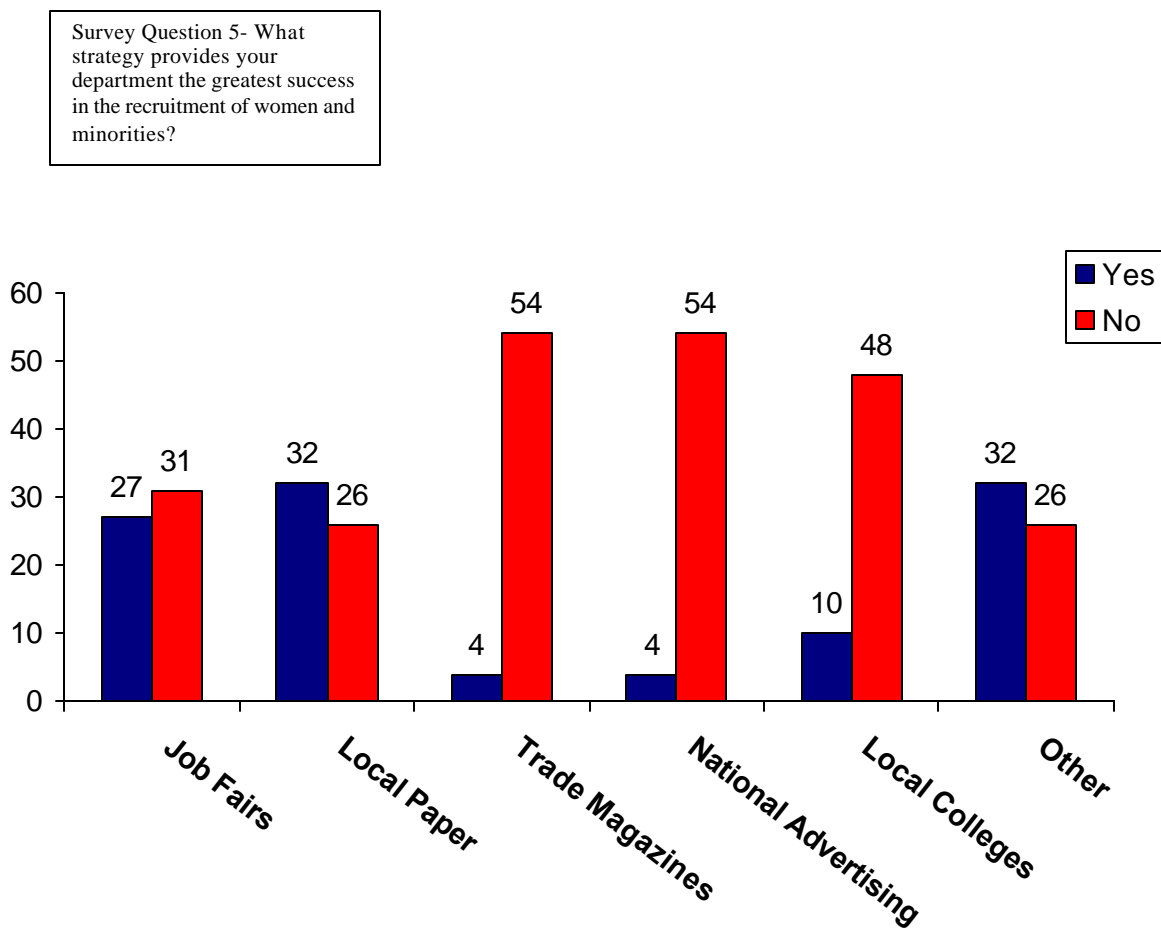
To stay on top of these challenges, old habits have to be changed. Those who are used to waiting for candidates just to walk through the door will have to use new and innovative strategies to recruit candidates in their fire departments.

The literature review was useful in naming numerous strategies available for the effective recruiting of women and minorities. The literature addressed short-term strategies such as using billboards and attending job fairs. The review also listed some long-term strategies such as developing relations with schools and initiating an internship program.

Survey question number five gathered information concerning what strategies provide the greatest success to departments for recruiting women and minorities (see Figure 5). The three most successful were advertising in the local paper (32 of 58), “other” (32 of 58), and attending job fairs (27 of 58).

Aggressive recruitment using a variety of strategies is a must. The most effective recruitment strategies for the fire service are newspaper ads, employee referrals, colleges and universities, advertising in trade magazines, and contacting fire service professional societies (Johnson 1995).

Figure 5



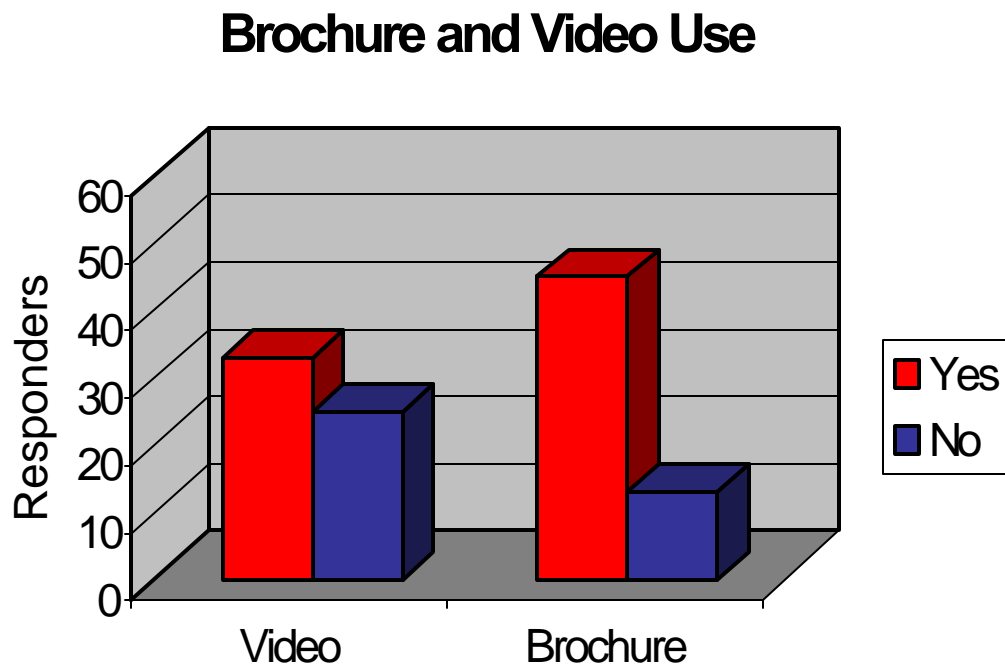
Some of the responses to “other” strategies that departments use included advertising at local spas and churches and other establishments, legal mandates, booths at shopping malls, attending neighborhood groups, and word of mouth.

Other recruiting strategies listed in the literature review included the use of brochures and videos. Brochures and videos are used as support material to assist candidates in understanding the value of your fire department and why they should come to work for you. The brochure or video should speak to the candidate’s concerns and answer questions they might have about the position.

Survey question six indicated 45 of 58 (77.5%) use a recruiting brochure in their process. The brochure at 77.5% was more popular than the video at 57% (see Figure 6). Both of these tools are representative of the commitment from organizational leaders to recruiting efforts.

Survey Question 6- *Does your department use a video or brochure in its recruiting efforts?*

Figure 6



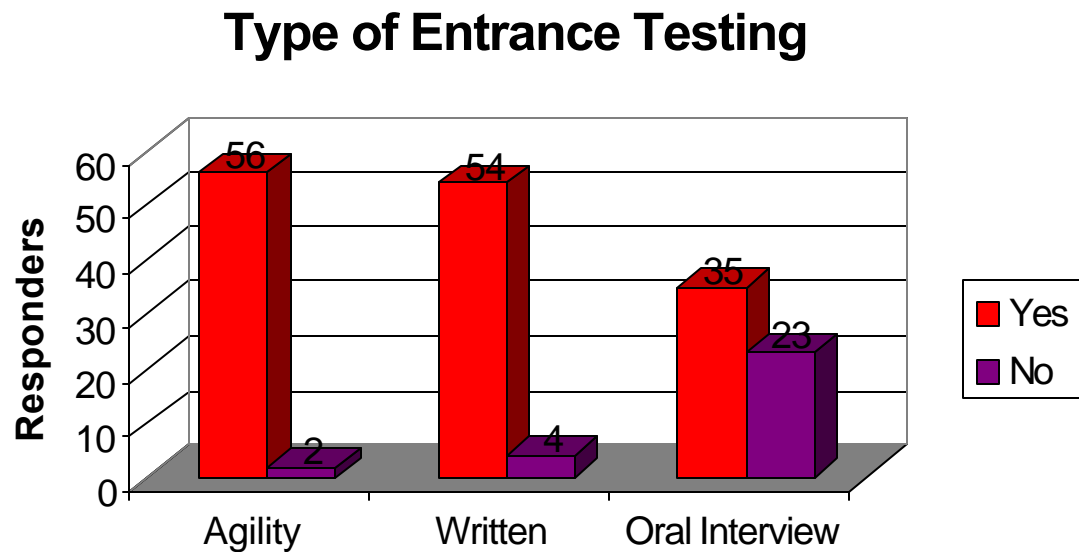
The fourth research question addressed “What hiring instruments are fire departments using in the hiring process.

Few things are more critical to a fire department as the selection of new employees. Some departments rely solely on interviews and resumes. Others will have a battery of tests including written and agility testing for firefighters. There are volumes of information and opinions on the best instruments for hiring firefighters. Which instruments are the best will not be a major piece of this research, however some must be mentioned because of their possible impact on the hiring of women and minorities.

Survey question seven revealed that most departments conduct agility and written tests, and an oral interview for hiring firefighters (see Figure 7).

Figure 7

Survey Question 7 - *Does your hiring process use the following?*

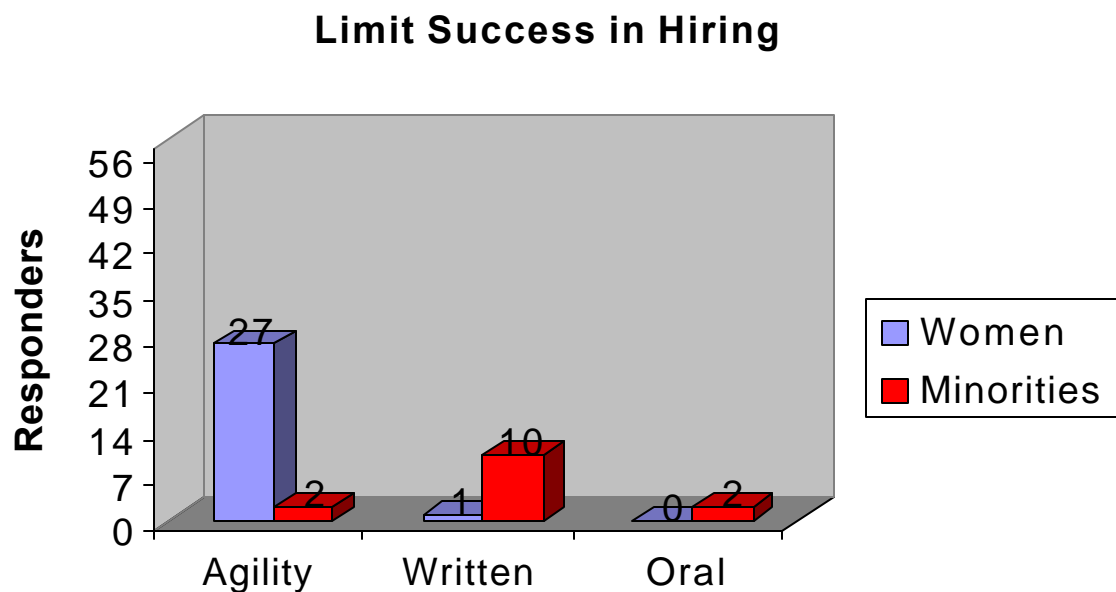


Survey questions eight and nine gathered information on the instruments of the hiring process that fire departments use that may affect success in the hiring of women and minorities. Of the 58 departments responding to the survey, 27 of 58 (46.5 %) indicated the agility test limited their success in hiring women firefighters. The only other instrument that some felt had affect on hiring was the written test. Of the 58 departments responding, 10 (17.2 %) felt the written exam limited their success in hiring minority firefighters (see Figure 8).

The instruments used in the hiring process are not a major part of this research. It is important however to research if any have an affect on maintaining a diverse work force. Fire Departments can have an aggressive approach on recruiting women and minorities, however if any of the instruments affect the final hiring outcome, employers must reevaluate their hiring programs.

Survey Question 8 & 9 – *Do any testing components limit your success in hiring women and minorities?*

Figure 8



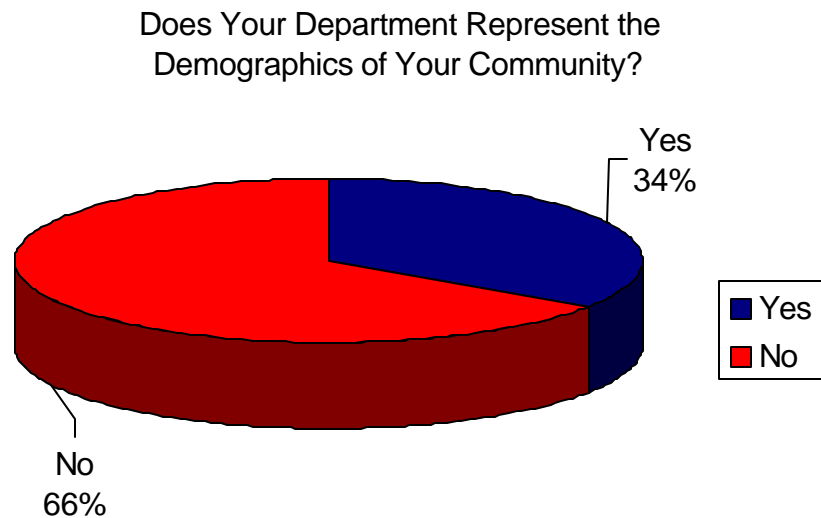
Survey question ten concerned providing applicant support prior to testing to increase success for candidates. The survey indicated that 36 of 58 (62%) provide support to the candidates for the agility test. With over 46% departments responding that the physical agility test affects the successful hiring of women (see Figure 8), having 62% provide support seems appropriate. The survey indicated that 30 of 58 (52%) offered support for the written exam while only 12 of 58 (21%) offered support for the oral interview.

The survey showed the commitment of fire departments to recruit a diverse work force. With the vast majority providing funds and tools for recruiting, it appears fire departments across the nation are taking a proactive approach to hiring women and minorities. The survey indicated that 39 of 58 (67%) work with an Equal Opportunity Department in their city to assist them.

However, even with all of the commitment and effort, only 20 of 58 (34%) represent the demographics of their community (see Figure 9). The research shows that fire departments must continue this aggressive approach to recruit women and minorities into the fire service.

Survey Question 12 – *Does your department represent the demographics of your community?*

Figure 9



The fifth, and final question, was “How can the effectiveness of the Task Force be evaluated”?

During Cole’s evaluation of “*Fire Safe*”, *California*, he condensed 56 factors for evaluating change from seven different change models into seven evaluation categories. He then took the seven factors and listed them in rank order according to the frequency of mention in the literature that he reviewed (See Table 6). He explained the models had many similarities and noted a number of overlapping and redundant factors such as leadership and vision. He states “these same change factors may or may not apply to a different change effort” (Cole, 1998). This author has used this same methodology to evaluate the Grand Rapids Fire Department Recruitment Task Force. These factors addressed will

Table 6

Factors for Evaluating Effectiveness of Change

CHANGE EFFECTIVENESS FACTORS	
1	Leadership
2	Vision
3	Empowerment
4	Pilot Projects
5	Communications
6	Institutionalization
7	Sense of Urgency

Source: Cole, 1998

DISCUSSION

The research conducted for this project provides a mechanism to conduct a performance evaluation of the Recruitment Task Force. The process is based on literature information and the survey instrument.

Factor 1: Communicate the urgency of the problem.

Steps must be taken to ensure all personnel affected by the change effort recognize the urgency and pace as change sponsors. A powerful force driving change is information. In the November memorandum or during the first meeting it was never stressed why the Task Force was necessary. Being a “communicator” is an essential change behavior by a change leader. Effective communication regarding a proposed change can go a long way toward acceptance of the change. Communicating the rationale and implications of a proposed change, along with how the change will be operationalized, can restore a sense of control (FEMA, 1996).

The statistics showed the real need for action. Communication of why the change was necessary and the implications of what could happen if changes were not made could have been improved.

Program Efficiency Grade: D+

Factor 2: Form A Powerful Leadership Coalition.

The Grand Rapids Fire Department needed to form a group that would take on the challenge of obtaining a diverse work force. To be effective, the group needed to be comprised of individuals who believed in the cause. The Task Force is comprised of 14 dedicated members who want their efforts to be a success. Recruiting a diverse work force is a long-term commitment for the City as well as the Task Force.

The Task Force was formed by using “Bottom-up team strategy”. This strategy relies on gathering input from lower-level personnel, such as line employees in corporation or station-level firefighters in a fire service organization (FEMA).

The Task Force not only had the power of input, they were responsible to state the goals and objectives for the group.

Program Efficiency Grade: B+

Factor 3: Develop A Compelling Vision.

To develop a compelling vision involves creating an environment, which unites and promotes overall support of the change. This environment should create a common direction that is perceived and supported at all levels of the organization.

If a guiding coalition with a sense of urgency is to be successful, it must develop a picture of the future that is easy to communicate and appeals to change leaders, stakeholders, and employees of the organization expected to change (Cole, 1998). A change that affects the whole organization such as the Recruitment Task Force should be communicated to the whole organization in a means other than a memorandum. The whole picture needed to be communicated to the entire department so the vision could be organization wide. The only members of the organization with the vision or sense of urgency are members of the Recruitment

Task Force. The chances of being successful in such a change effort without the whole organization understanding the vision, makes institutionalizing more difficult. The importance and the advantages of maintaining a diverse work force must be communicated to the entire organization.

Program Efficiency Grade: C-

Factor 4: Empower Others To Act On The Vision.

The Recruitment Task Force was empowered to address the challenge of recruiting a diverse work force. The Task Force formulated its own goals and objectives. The goals included:

1. Utilize diverse recruitment teams at all events.
2. Develop a system of targeted recruiting.
3. Create a Candidate Information Center.
4. Develop specialized recruitment material.

Program Efficiency Grade: C-

Factor 5: Implement Successful Pilot Programs.

The first goal involved clarifying group commitment to always have a recruitment effort include a diverse team of Grand Rapids Fire Department members. The second goal to “Develop a system of targeted recruiting” involved”:

- Established liaisons with area schools and colleges
- Utilize presentations to neighborhood association
- Establish contacts with ethnic groups
- Establish contacts with area churches

These goals were an excellent beginning for the Task Force. They were easy to achieve and set the stage for future success.

As a group, they determined strategies for the successful recruitment of women and minorities

Program Efficiency Grade: B

Factor 6: Develop Momentum By Leveraging Successes.

Some people fully intend to accept the challenge of change, they just want to adapt according to their own schedule. Shortly after the Retreat in March of 1996, the Task Force began acting on its objectives. They developed teams to attend local job fairs and ethnic events. The literature review revealed the initial Task Force recruiting effort in 1996 had a definite impact. The women and minority representation for testing rose from just over 17% in 1995 to over 28% in 1996. Their efforts were aggressive and had immediate impact on improving the representation of female and minority applicants testing for the position of firefighter.

Program Efficiency Grade: B

Factor 7: Market The Vision.

This rapidly changing world demands a higher level of adaptability. Proper management of the changes must overcome resistance to the diversity being brought about by the changing work force. Institutionalizing of the Recruitment Task Force and the changes it stands for will take time. It is most important to market this vision for the whole department. To limit the vision to just the Task Force is limited vision.

Program Efficiency Grade: C

RECOMMENDATIONS

The purpose of this research project was to conduct an evaluation of the Grand Rapids Fire Department Recruitment Task Force. Although institutionalism is the ultimate goal of any change management project, its achievement or existence does not signal the end of the process

(FEMA 1996). The change process must be evaluated so that alterations and recommendations can be made as needed.

Based on the results, the author makes the following recommendations.

1. Hold diversity training for the entire Grand Rapids Fire Department.

This training would help all recognize issues that impact employees and organizational effectiveness and relationships.

2. Re-introduce the Task Force and its mission to the department to assist in the institutionalism of the change effort.

The 1995 memorandum fell short of communicating the rationale behind this change effort during its implementation. Communicating the importance and advantages of obtaining a diverse work force would restore a sense of urgency within the entire organization.

3. Alter/Modify change goals as required.

In the literature review it was mentioned to evaluate whether a change management approach is successful can be determined by evaluating the effects of implementation against the goals and objectives set out in the change plan (FEMA 196). The Task Force formulated four original goals. The first two were developing recruiting contacts and strategies. The goals were “small-win “ type of goals and the statistics verified their success. The survey instrument verified many departments are using these same strategies.

The remaining two goals were not completed. They need to be acted upon along with new goals formulated. The new goals should be measurable, obtainable, and time specific. With the available statistics, numbers should drive some goals. These could include raising the number from the current 1998 levels of representation by 15%.

4. Complete the recruitment video and brochure.

The literature stated these were effective strategies and the survey instrument revealed the brochure to be more popular than the video, however many departments use both in their recruiting efforts. The brochure and video are means to inform the applicant about the department and will answer many of the applicant's concerns.

5. Research the hiring instrument process for alteration/modification.

The research revealed an overall increase in the representation of women and minorities taking the test for the position of firefighter. The author noted while reviewing the statistics that there has been an overall drop in the representation of women and minorities in the department since 1991. We must not only recruit a diverse group to the testing process; an effort must be made to give the applicants support to attain the position of firefighter. The survey instrument revealed most departments offer support for both the agility and written tests.

6. Commit an operating budget for the Task Force.

The benefit of giving monies for the Task Force to operate is twofold. The literature mentioned how expensive the recruiting process can be. However, recruiting the right people for the job will save money in the long-term. The survey instrument revealed that over two-thirds of the responding departments have a budget.

The other benefit of an operating budget is it shows the commitment to the change. Change leaders must not only present the organization change; they must produce the vision. The people who are chosen or volunteer to bring about change must be given the tools to do so.

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**Applied Research Project Survey
National Fire Academy
Strategic Management of Change 1999**

1. *Department Size:*

- | | |
|------------|------------|
| A. 0-50 | D. 151-200 |
| B. 51-100 | E. 201-250 |
| C. 101-150 | F. Above |

2. *Which services does your department provide to your community?*

- | | |
|-----------|-------------------|
| A. Fire | D. Confined space |
| B. EMS | E. Water rescue |
| C. Hazmat | F. Other _____ |

3. *Does your annual budget provide funds for recruiting purposes?*

- A. YES
B. NO

4. *Does your department use a "Recruitment Task Force" or a similar tool to aid in the recruitment of women and minorities?*

- A. YES
B. NO

5. *What provides your department the greatest success in the recruitment of women and minorities?*

- | | |
|-----------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| A. Attending job fairs | D. Advertising nationally |
| B. Advertising in local paper | E. Advertising at local colleges |
| C. Advertising in trade magazines | F. Other _____ |

6. *Does your department use the following?*

- | | | |
|-------------------------|-----|----|
| A. Recruitment video | YES | NO |
| B. Recruitment brochure | YES | NO |

7. *Does your hiring process use the following?*

- | | | |
|-----------------|-----|----|
| A. Agility Test | YES | NO |
| B. Written Exam | YES | NO |
| C. Oral Exam | YES | NO |

OVER

8. Do the following testing components limit your success in the hiring of women?

- | | | |
|-----------------|-----|----|
| A. Agility Test | YES | NO |
| B. Written Exam | YES | NO |
| C. Oral Exam | YES | NO |

9. Do the following testing components limit your success in the hiring of minorities?

- | | | |
|-----------------|-----|----|
| A. Agility Test | YES | NO |
| B. Written Exam | YES | NO |
| C. Oral Exam | YES | NO |

10. Does your department offer applicant support to increase testing success (i.e., physical conditioning, study guides, etc) ?

- | | | |
|-----------------|-----|----|
| A. Agility Test | YES | NO |
| B. Written Exam | YES | NO |
| C. Oral Exam | YES | NO |

Explain: _____

11. Does your City have an Equal Employment Opportunity Department that assists in recruitment efforts?

- A. YES
B. NO

12. Does your department represent the demographics of your community?

- A. YES
B. NO

Your department will not be identified by name in the research report. Please provide your department's name and contact person if any follow-up questions are needed.

Department: _____ Contact person: _____

Telephone: _____ E-mail: _____

YOUR TIME AND EFFORT IS APPRECIATED.