

**COMMUNICATING THE ORGANIZATIONAL CULTURE OF CHESTERFIELD FIRE
AND EMERGENCY MEDICAL SERVICES**

Executive Development

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Abstract

The problem was that an effective method was needed to communicate the organizational culture of Chesterfield Fire and Emergency Medical Services to entry-level members of the organization. The purpose of this research was to identify an effective method for communicating the organizational culture of Chesterfield Fire and Emergency Medical Services to entry-level members of the organization. This was an evaluative research project. The research questions were:

1. What is the culture of an organization and how is it described?
2. How do other organizations communicate their culture to new entrants?
3. How effective has Chesterfield Fire and EMS been in communicating its culture to entry level members thus far?
4. What methods or approaches might enhance and increase the effectiveness of Chesterfield Fire and EMS in communicating its culture to new members?

The procedures involved interviews with personnel responsible for leading and instructing recruit schools. In addition a survey was conducted for members of Recruit Schools 30, 31, and 32. Their responses were tabulated both numerically and by percentage.

The results were: approximately three-quarters of those surveyed recalled some classroom discussion on culture, while 61% recalled a classroom discussion of history. In both cases, the recruits stated that stories were the most prevalent method to assist in this teaching. There currently is no formal indoctrination program in place. Recruits report that most of their exposure to the organization's culture is from their fellow firefighters in the stations.

Recommendations, based on this study, are for Chesterfield Fire and EMS to develop an official training program on the organization's history and culture; that this be instructed by the leaders of the organization early in the recruit training process; that a compilation of the

organization's history and "stories" be produced as a teaching tool; that a videotape be developed to allow members to tell the organization's story; that first line and middle managers be trained in educating these members; and that the organization's web site be further developed to provide this information on the organization's culture to prospective members.

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Introduction

The problem is that an effective method is needed to communicate the organizational culture of Chesterfield Fire and Emergency Medical Services to entry-level members of the organization. The purpose of this research will be to identify an effective method for communicating the organizational culture of Chesterfield Fire and Emergency Medical Services to entry-level members of the organization. This is an evaluative research project. The research questions are:

1. What is the culture of an organization and how is it described?
2. How do other organizations communicate their culture to new entrants?
3. How effective has Chesterfield Fire and EMS been in communicating its culture to entry level members thus far?
4. What methods or approaches might enhance and increase the effectiveness of Chesterfield Fire and EMS in communicating its culture to new members?

Background and Significance

Chesterfield Fire and Emergency Medical Services (CFEMS) was first organized in 1969. Through the years, the organization has become known for providing high-quality service to its customers, the taxpayers of Chesterfield County. The organization developed this reputation because of strong leadership during the early years. This strong leadership provided by the Fire Chief became engrained in the members of the organization. This same Chief Fire Executive remained at the helm for twenty-five years. During this time, there was a strong emphasis on the teaching of the history of the organization. This served as a tool to impart to the incoming firefighters a sense of understanding regarding where the organization had been and how it had progressed. This Chief's tenure was marked by a strong emphasis on discipline. This had been

especially necessary during the early years, but many felt that it was overdone and the reins had been pulled too tight for too long.

When the first Chief retired, the organization's Deputy Chief was appointed as the new Fire Chief. Many in the organization were unhappy with the way the organization had been run. This new Chief set out to relax things and bring about an atmosphere where employees enjoyed their job more. However, in so doing, some of the emphasis on history was lost, because many people saw it as an anchor that held the organization back from moving into the future. But, in losing this emphasis, a lot of the reasoning for many of the things that we do was also lost. The sense of discipline was also lost on many, and accountability suffered greatly.

After three years, this Chief also retired. Another Deputy Chief was then appointed as Chief. This Chief continues to lead the organization today. He has attempted to bring the organization back to a more balanced attitude in that we are encouraged to enjoy our jobs, while at the same time being accountable for our actions. Officers in particular are held accountable. This return to a more disciplined approach is difficult for the younger members to understand.

Today, a recruit firefighter has the opportunity to sit down and listen to some of the members of the organization who began their careers in the first two to three years of the organization's existence. These members can explain the history behind the current status and standing in the community. The organization enjoys tremendous community support. This is evidenced by the continued support of bond referenda for new station construction. It is also evidenced by the results of the Citizen Satisfaction Survey, most recently conducted in 2001. This survey revealed that 89% of the respondents were satisfied with the organization's operation (Chesterfield, 2001). This represented one of the highest rated departments in the

County. Entry-level members only need to speak with the older members of the organization to find out the history behind this support.

In the next ten years, CFEMS will see a sharp increase in retirements. It is projected that 70 members will retire during that period (CFEMS, 2003a). New firefighters will have to be hired to fill these vacancies. In addition, there are plans to construct a minimum of two new fire stations. Each station will require the hiring of eighteen to twenty-one new members. In addition, there will be approximately 30 promotions ranging from the Fire Chief and Deputy Chief positions (possibly more than once) to Captains and Lieutenants(CFEMS, 2003a).

With these retirements comes the loss of many years of experience, and a sense of touch with the history of the organization. With the loss of experience and tenure also comes a new generation of firefighter, one that will, much as a young child, constantly question why. In the future, it will be more difficult to help entry-level personnel, uniformed or civilian, understand how the organization has evolved and what the culture of the organization is all about. Therefore, it is important to the continued success of CFEMS to develop a method by which to communicate this message.

This Applied Research Project (ARP) relates to Unit 7: Organizational Culture, of the National Fire Academy's (NFA) Executive Fire Officer Program (EFOP) Executive Development Course. Specifically, it addresses Unit Objective 5, which states "Complete an abbreviated plan to further assess and analyze their organization's culture and climate" (NFA, 1998, SM 7-2). It is important for the organization to communicate the culture to its entry-level members. This must be accomplished by the organization and not left to chance with the members of the organization.

This ARP relates to the United States Fire Administration's operational objective that states "to promote within communities a comprehensive, multi-hazard risk-reduction plan led by the fire service organization" (NFA, 2002, p. II-2). In order for the fire service to be effective in this leadership role, the culture of the organization must be understood and fostered for continued success.

Literature Review

The purpose for this literature review will be to seek information that has been previously documented concerning the topic of organizational culture and how it is communicated. The review will address the four research questions. First, what is the culture of an organization and how is it described? Second, how do other organizations communicate their culture to new entrants? Third, how effective has Chesterfield Fire and EMS been in communicating its culture to entry level members thus far? Finally, what methods or approaches might enhance and increase the effectiveness of Chesterfield Fire and EMS in communicating its culture to new members?

To begin an examination of organizational culture (OC), it is critical to be able to answer, "What is the culture of an organization and how is it described?" The National Fire Academy, in its Executive Development student manual states that "Culture is essentially the product of two major sources: the assumptions (values and beliefs) that leaders, founders, and employees bring with them to the organization, and the actual experience(s) of people within the organization adapting to the internal and external environment(s)" (1998, p. 7-3). The National Fire Academy Student Manual for the class "Organizational Theory in Practice" defines O.C. as "the set of values, assumptions, guiding beliefs, attitudes, and feelings shared by people in an organization" (2000, p. 3-8). This manual (NFA, 2000) goes on to state that O.C. is one of the

14 elements of an organization. This manual also defines it as “a set of important assumptions (often unstated) that members of a community (organization) have in common” (NFA, 2000, p. 8-9). It further describes the two basic types of assumptions. These are beliefs and values. “Beliefs are basic assumptions about the world and how it works.” (NFA, 2000, p. 8-9) “Values are basic assumptions about what ideals are desirable and worth striving for.” (NFA, 2000, p. 8-9)

Author Carter McNamara states that “Organizational culture is the personality of the organization” (1999, p. 1). He further states that “Culture is comprised of the assumptions, values, norms and tangible signs (artifacts) of organization, members, and their behaviors” (McNamara, 1999, p. 1). He also believes that culture is a system. This system is comprised of inputs, processes, and outputs, similar to fabricating a project. The inputs include “feedback from society, professions, laws, stories, heroes, values on competition or service” (McNamara, 1999, p. 1). These inputs are then processed by the members based on “assumptions, values, and norms” (McNamara, 1999, p. 1). This results in outputs. These outputs include “organizational behaviors, technologies, strategies, image, products, services, appearance, etc” (McNamara, 1999, p. 1).

D. Larry Fraser, states that “Organizational Culture is the shared assumptions, or the inherent value system, by which members of the organization judge how to view their interaction with each other and with their organizational environment.” (1998, Abstract- para. 2) In its Website, Toolpack Consulting, LLC, states,

Organizational culture can loosely be defined as the shared assumptions, beliefs, and ‘normal behaviors’ (norms) of a group. These are powerful influences on the way people live and act, and they define what is ‘normal’ and how to sanction those who are not

‘normal’. To a large degree, what we do is determined by our culture” (Toolpack, para. 1).

E.H. Schein, who has done extensive research into this topic, defines organizational culture as:

A pattern of shared basic assumptions that the group learned as it solved its problems of external adaptation and internal integration, that has worked well enough to be considered valid and, therefore, to be taught to new members as the correct way you perceive, think, and feel in relation to those problems” (Schein, n.d., Culture formally defined, para. 1).

Schein goes on to explain that culture helps to explain the incomprehensible, and the irrational. He also believes that organizations with a history have a culture (Schein, n.d.).

Richard Seel writes that “Organisation [*sic*]culture is the emergent result of the continuing negotiations about values, meanings and proprieties between the members of that organization and with its environment” (2000, p.2). Mr. Seel refers to work done by Mr. Gerry Johnson. Mr. Johnson describes a cultural web. This web contains several components, including: rituals and routines; stories and myths; symbols; control systems; power structures; organization structures. All of these are overlapped by the paradigm or the set of core beliefs which holds the other components together (Johnson, 1992).

In the book *Nuts*, Frieberg and Frieberg state:

Culture is the glue that holds our organizations together. It encompasses beliefs, expectations, norms, rituals, communications patterns, symbols, heroes, and reward structures. Culture is not about magic formulas and secret plans; it is a combination of a thousand things. Kelleher and Barrett (Herb and Colleen, CEO and Executive Vice

President and Southwest Airlines) believe that culture is one of the most precious things a company has, so you must work harder at it than anything else. (1996, p.145)

These authors go on to further define culture as the:

present manifestation of the past: the challenges, successes, mistakes, and lessons learned. Culture becomes the organization's memory; it guides behavior and provides a sense of identity, stability, and organizational boundaries. Within organizational boundaries, people gauge the appropriateness of their thoughts, behaviors, and actions and determine the norms and values from the organization's cultural rules and beliefs (Frieberg and Frieberg, 1996, p.145).

One way of further describing O.C. is how it impacts the organization. O.C., once embedded, has a significant impact on the organization's ability to create change or to change processes. Stephen Covey (1992), in speaking about performance agreements, states

“More powerful than a psychological contract is a social contract and culture is nothing more than a composite social contract. And what we call ‘shared values’ is merely making implicit kind of norms explicit- ‘This is how we do things around here’”(p. 208).

Covey's point was that if a manager was to attempt to implement performance agreements, he would need to consider the existing culture of the organization (Covey, 1992).

Organizations that are looking to implement new programs, must consider the impact that their culture will have. Kouzes and Posner stated that “In order to take that first step toward renewed organizations- and a second and a third- people must agree on some fundamentals. A helpful intervention requires coming to agreement on a desired culture, i.e. a common set of operational principles about how things will be accomplished (1995, p. 272). D. Larry Fraser (1998), in an article about standardized programs states, “The degree to which they are in

harmony with the organization's culture in which they reside has a great deal to do with how they are regarded and how well they achieve their purpose (Overview, Item 2)

In its web-based discussion on culture, Toolpack Consulting, LLC states "Many companies have turned themselves around, converting imminent bankruptcy into prosperity. Some did it through financial gimmickry, but the ones who have become stars did it by changing their own culture" (Toolpack, 2003, para.3). Fortune magazine, in its 1995 Corporate Reputations survey, introduced the survey by stating "The one thing that set the top ranking companies in the survey apart is their robust cultures" (Frieberg and Frieberg, 1996, p. 144). Frieberg and Frieberg (1996) stated that in Southwest Airline's case, because of its early struggles to become a successful, functioning airline, the "survivalist" mentality has fostered "a close-knit, supportive, and family-like culture" (p. 145). The authors continue by saying "today the Southwest legend lives on in the company's rich culture" (Frieberg and Frieberg, 1996, p.146).

As important as culture can be to an organization, it can provide drawbacks as well. Richard Seel (2000), states that "Paradigms help us order and make sense of the world." (p. 5). Seel (2000) also believes that "Paradigms are the set of core beliefs which maintain the unity of the culture" (p. 4). Karl Weick (1993), in analyzing the Mann Gulch Disaster in which 13 smokejumpers were killed fighting a wildland fire, discussed sensemaking as one reason for the death of the firefighters. In this particular incident, the fire did not behave as expected. As conditions worsened, more and more things took place that did not make sense. Because of the culture of these firefighters, they expected their leader to take them out of the danger. When even his actions and orders failed to make sense, they no longer could make rational decisions on their own. Weick (1993) states that organizations "falter because of deficient sensemaking"

(p.636). Since sensemaking is tied to paradigms, and paradigms to culture, the culture of the organization can be deficient.

The second research question is how do other organizations communicate their culture to new entrants? The challenge is not to simply define the culture, but to articulate the culture to entry level personnel in an effective manner. One method can be found in the Phoenix, Arizona Fire Department. This department, which is considered to be a forward-looking agency by most, has developed the *PFD Way*. In the introduction to this document the following explanation is shown:

Our Fire Department is a unique organization, not just within the fire service, but compared to most large organizations – public or private. Our members are frequently asked what makes the Phoenix Fire Department so unique. The answer to this question is simple- It is our people and our philosophy. Explaining our philosophy is not so simple. “The PFD Way” was developed with the intent of describing this Departmental Philosophy. It is also intended to be prescriptive – that is, to describe who we would like our Department to be (Phoenix, 2002b, Introduction, para.2).

This document further explains that members are a select group who must want to be members. With membership comes certain “expectations and standards” (Phoenix, 2002b, Introduction, para. 3) that must be adhered to. The members are seen as family. “The ‘PFD Way’ attempts to describe the vision and culture of this family” (Phoenix, 2002b, Introduction, para.4). This document is co-written between labor and management and addresses concerns from both sides. But, the bottom line is that the document “exists for all members of the Phoenix Fire Department. Read it carefully. It will also be explained to you in detail” (Phoenix, 2002b, Philosophy and Culture, Section One, para.1).

Southwest Airlines, one of the most successful airlines in the United States over the past few years, begins the indoctrination process with their recruiting and hiring practices. They advertise for people who are different and use these differences in the hiring process. Southwest “hires for attitude and trains for skills” (Frieberg and Frieberg, 1993, p. 66). A large part of the Southwest culture, is the *Southwest spirit*. This is defined as “an intangible quality in people that causes them to *want* to do whatever it takes and to *want* to go that extra mile whenever they need to” (Frieberg and Frieberg, 1993, p.69). By hiring people with a sense of humor and the right attitude, they are able to get employees who often will spend their entire career with Southwest. This results in better customer service and reduced costs for training new hires (Frieberg and Frieberg, 1993). Recruiting brochures, ads, and the organization’s web site are designed to draw applicants with the right attitude. They stress the attitudes that are needed to be successful in this company.

General Electric, built into a very successful organization by former CEO Jack Welch, uses its Internet home page to describe the values of the organization, and explain to the prospective employee how they will be successful in the organization. As to which parts of the culture make GE the best choice for a career, the web site touts its diversity and global mindset (both in cultures and in types of businesses). The opportunity for lifelong learning is present as well. It boasts that GE invests nearly \$1 billion a year in career development. The site also stresses the “boundaryless” environment. There are no walls between divisions and workgroups. Information is shared as are ideas (GE, 2002a).

The site also describes the values of the organization. It lists the three traditions of GE (Unyielding Integrity, Commitment to Performance and Thirst for Change). It also lists several other values. These values place emphasis on such things as being quality driven, having a

global perspective and workforce, the importance of the individual, using the company's size to take risks in growth, using technology, and in general being leaders (GE, 2002).

These values and reasons for choosing GE as a career fall right in line with the culture that was generated during the years that Jack Welch was the CEO. In the book, *Jack, Straight from the Gut*, about Mr. Welch, many of these issues were discussed. The book describes the risks taken, the failures and the successes involved in the many deals that were negotiated during his time as CEO. The diversity of GE's businesses (they are no longer just a light bulb company) is almost amazing. From medical supplies, to appliances, to financing, to broadcasting, GE has shown that it can be successful in many areas. They believe highly in using the local workers in the foreign businesses. Mr. Welch spoke very highly of the work ethic of most foreign workers. It also described the development of one of the earliest corporate universities at Crotonville. This became a training ground for everything from new employee orientation to management and leadership training. But, it became a critical component to implementing change in the organization (Welch, 2001).

Finally, examining Walt Disney World's (WDW) introduction of corporate culture to the new employee, Mr. Burkell describes yet another approach. All members of the cast are sent through "Disney University". This is where they receive their "first formal exposure to WDW" (Burkell, 1995, p. 7-35). At Disney University, a program is taught that is known as "Disney Traditions". All Disney employees are required to go through the "Traditions" program. This is an example of an actual classroom setting in which to communicate the culture of the organization. It is a day and a half session where the "standards of the firm are established", and the "dress code is established" (Burkell, 1995, p.7-35). This session "attempts to integrate and orient the employee through a variety of activities, including the history and achievement of the

Disney Organization”. (Burkell, 1995, p. 7-35) “The cast member’s role in the show or performance, and their traits in maintaining the show” (Burkell, 1995, p. 7-35) are covered in this session. From the very beginning, these new employees are taught through various activities that the elements of the “Disney show” are safety, courtesy, show, and efficiency (Burkell, 1995).

The third research question is, how effective has Chesterfield Fire and EMS been in communicating its culture to entry level members thus far? Although this question will be more thoroughly examined through a survey, it is necessary to examine what techniques are currently used to communicate this culture? Two documents were examined to determine the level of instruction on organizational culture during recruit school. The standard recruit school schedule was examined and it was determined that there was no specific time period devoted to a discussion of organizational culture and history (CFEMS, 2003b). This same schedule has been used for the past two recruit schools.

Another document that was examined was a series of leadership and history lessons that one of the key instructors had begun using in the last two recruit classes. These lessons were short (five minute) discussions of an aspect of the history of the fire service and what impact this history had on present-day organizations. Often there were one or two questions that the students were to answer for homework as was related to their experience or their findings through their reading. (Kemp, 2002)

The last research question is what methods or approaches might enhance and increase the effectiveness of Chesterfield Fire and EMS in communicating its culture to new members? Several methods were identified during the literature review. Some were noted earlier under the second question but will be revisited here. The use of the organizational internet web page was

shown with GE's site. This site describes the culture of the organization through the explanation of the values, the key growth initiatives, and reasons for someone to build a career at GE (GE, 2002a). By accessing this web page, one can see how the company supports its employees and how the company plans to continue to grow in the next few years.

Southwest Airlines demonstrates the significance of *the Southwest spirit* or the corporate culture, by hiring to achieve it. Prospective employees are screened for their ability to work in the Southwest environment. They recognize that not everyone is capable of working in this fun environment and that this trait cannot be taught. Frieberg and Frieberg give an example: one group of prospective pilots were offered the opportunity during the early stages of the interview process to change into shorts along with their jackets, ties, and dress shoes. This was intended to measure their ability to laugh at themselves and display a sense of humor. Of the eight who were interviewing, six took advantage of the opportunity. You can probably guess which six were hired! (1996)

In order to attract these types of people, Southwest uses recruitment advertising to attract the right people. "One ad shows a teacher chiding a boy for coloring outside the lines on a picture of a tyrannosaurus. The message? 'Brian shows an early aptitude for working at Southwest Airlines... at Southwest Airlines you get check pluses for breaking the mold. For 'coloring outside the lines'"(Frieberg and Frieberg, 1996, page 69). Another ad shows former Southwest CEO Herb Kelleher dressed in an Elvis suit. The caption on the ad says "Work in a place where Elvis has been spotted... Send your resume Attention Elvis"(Frieberg and Frieberg, 1996, page 69).

Phoenix Fire Department uses the document "The PFD Way" to communicate the culture of the organization. The document which was co-written by labor and management attempts to

describe the values and assumptions that are made about being a “member” of the Phoenix Fire Department. This is provided as a written document and is also placed in its entirety on the Department’s web page. This provides two methods for transmitting the information. A prospective member can read the information prior to applying, and will have a written copy to have for future reference. In addition, the document is explained to the recruits during their training. (Phoenix, 2002b)

Walt Disney World requires new cast members to spend their second day of employment on their own in Walt Disney World. The intent of this training according to Mr. Burkell (1995), is to allow the member to “witness how a guest perceives and experiences both ‘good and bad show’” (p.7-35). The employees also attend the “Disney Traditions” training. No one is allowed to bypass this training. This provides the new cast member with an “official” version of the Disney culture. This class is provided by trained instructors who have a specific message to send to the employees. This message can then become the framework for future experience and learning. (Burkell)

Procedures

In order to properly research this topic, a thorough review of the pertinent literature will be conducted. It will also involve the review of several books available in libraries and through book stores. The Internet will be a particularly beneficial resource for this topic. Numerous web pages and on-line articles exist on this topic since it has become a popular topic of study among the world’s business environment.

Another step in this research project will be to conduct a survey of the members of the last three recruit classes to graduate from CF&EMS Training and Safety Division. Since this research project is focused on the communication of the culture to entry-level members, this

group is the target audience for this survey. A listing of the members of Recruit Classes 30, 31, and 32 will be obtained from the organization's Staffing Management Team. The survey questions have been chosen to attempt to learn what methodologies have been used in recent history to communicate information about the organization's culture. The survey instrument and a cover letter will be developed and the survey will be sent to the recruits through the interdepartmental mail system. Responses will be returned through the interdepartmental mail as well. In order to ensure understanding of the topic of the survey, a working definition of "organizational culture" has been provided for reference. (See Appendix A for content of survey)

The survey will be tested for understanding by the members of the Staffing Management Team. This group has recently conducted a web-based survey of fire departments in Canada and the United States. Significant time was spent developing that survey, and the team can provide a fresh perspective on the survey instrument.

Interviews will be conducted with those within CF&EMS who have had responsibility for these same recruit schools. Their roles were Training Director, Training Captain responsible for recruit training, and the Lieutenant who served as the primary instructor. The intent of this survey is to determine which methodologies they intended to be used to communicate this information. In addition, their input toward future schools will be solicited. (See Appendix B for interview questions)

Data will be displayed using tables to supplement the text. The data will not be used for statistical inference to recruits in general. It will be used to take a snapshot, if you will, of the three most recent classes.

Limitations and Assumptions

This study was limited to the last three CFEMS recruit classes. These classes have graduated within the past three years. It is believed that any information obtained from classes prior to that may be inaccurate because members may not be able to remember well enough to provide accurate answers.

Definitions of Terms

Recruit Firefighter- According to CFEMS, a firefighter from the date of hire, through graduation from the recruit school. At this time, all newly hired personnel, regardless of experience, have to attend this training process.

Recruit School- The official process of training newly hired career members. During this training process, recruit firefighters attend Chesterfield County Orientation, and are required to attain Firefighter I and II, Hazardous Materials- Operations Level, Emergency Medical Technician-Basic, (Commonwealth of Virginia Certifications), as well as the Chesterfield Motor Pump Operations School, and Level I Technical Rescue program. In addition, they are introduced to various other topics. This school lasts for fifteen weeks plus a three week EMT class. In most cases, all newly hired employees begin their career in a recruit school. Occasionally, a CFEMS volunteer, or a member hired from a surrounding jurisdiction may be placed into a station temporarily until the recruit school begins.

Entry Level member- Any newly hired employee of CFEMS. This can be an operational person (firefighter), or a civilian position (support services)

Staffing Management Team- A special project team assembled in November, 2002, to examine and make recommendations on improvements to the leave and staffing system for

operational personnel. This team collected a great deal of data and worked as a team through June 1, 2004.

Results

In order to accurately communicate organizational culture to entry-level members, one must be able to answer the first research question which is “What is the culture of an organization and how is it described?” To summarize the numerous definitions found during the literature review the following definition will be accepted: *Organizational culture is the application of a set of fundamental beliefs, values and assumptions through which members of the organization view themselves, the organization, and the environment and which determines their behaviors and their response to problems and unusual circumstances. Organizational culture is a result of past organizational experience and historical context. It will continue to evolve as the experience and core beliefs of its members evolves.*

It is generally accepted that culture includes the basic assumptions, values and beliefs of the members of the organization. Examples include: “...the set of values, assumptions, guiding beliefs...” (NFA, 2000, p. 3-8); “Culture is comprised of assumptions, values, norms and tangible signs of the organization...” (McNamara, 1999, p.1); “Culture is the shared assumptions, beliefs...” (Toolpack, 2003, para.1); Culture is a pattern of shared basic assumptions that the group learned” (Schein, n.d., Culture formally defined, para. 1).

The term assumption can be further broken down into two types. These are beliefs and values. “Beliefs are basic assumptions about the world and how it works.” “Values are basic assumptions about what ideals are desirable and worth striving for” (NFA, 2000, p.8-9). These two concepts “define what is ‘normal’ and how to sanction those who are not ‘normal’” (Toolpack, 2003, para.1).

Friberg and Friberg define culture as the “present manifestation of the past: the challenges, successes, mistakes, and lessons learned. Culture becomes the organization’s memory.” (1996, p. 145) Schein (n.d.) states that culture “helps to explain the incomprehensible, and the irrational. He also believes that organizations with history have a culture” (Culture formally defined- summary).

The second research question is “How do other organizations communicate their culture to new entrants? The literature review shows that this is accomplished in a variety of ways. Phoenix Fire Department uses their web site to provide potential members with information about the organization’s culture. In addition, they have written a document entitled “The PFD Way”. This document describes the various aspects of the culture of that department and is a part of the web page posting (Phoenix, 2002b).

General Electric (GE) also utilizes its web site to provide prospective members with a feeling of the culture of the organization. On its site it discusses the diversity of the company (diversity in businesses, opportunities, and cultures). It also relates the “global” work environment that “shares information across borders and across businesses in working environments that foster open, fluid communications” (GE, 2002b, GE Values). GE is also committed to opportunities for life-long learning, investing nearly \$1 billion a year in career development opportunities. The site also describes the boundaryless environment. Using this culture, people “talk to each other and share knowledge. Sales people share leads, engineers share technologies, people share ideas resulting in great innovations” (GE, 2002a, G.E. Careers).

Southwest Airlines culture is known for expecting its employees to have fun on the job. There is only one way to ensure that this happens. Recruit the people who will fit into the culture. Therefore, one of the methods that Southwest uses is through recruitment ads and hiring

practices. By recruiting the right people, less time is spent having to indoctrinate the new employee into the culture. Southwest realizes that unlike skills, attitude cannot be taught, therefore, their hiring philosophy is to “hire for attitude and train for skills” (Frieberg and Frieberg, 1996, page 66). This begins with the recruiting process. Southwest intentionally makes its recruitment literature reflective of its culture so that the right people will apply. Then, they test them with various opportunities to have fun. Those that take advantage move along in the process. Those that do not take advantage will most likely go home disappointed (Frieberg and Frieberg, 1996).

Walt Disney World is known for its magical environment. This concept was the brainchild of the founder, Walt Disney, and maintaining that environment is the key to the company’s success. Disney was quoted as saying “You can dream, create, design, and build the most wonderful place in the world... but it requires people to make the dream a reality” (Burkell, 1995, SM 7-25). This is the thought that is behind the interactions of the company and its members. Because the members are so essential to the success of the operation, Walt Disney World relies on formalized training sessions (Disney Traditions) to teach new members the Disney culture and what makes it so successful. In addition, these new members are sent out into the parks with the intent of observing the interactions of members with the customers, looking for examples of “good show” and “bad show” (Burkell, 1995).

In an effort to locate other examples of cultural training a survey was conducted of the members of the last three CFEMS recruit classes. Specifically they were asked “Has any employer provided you with training at the entry level about the culture of the organization?” They were also asked “If so, what methodologies did they use?” (See Appendix A for content of the survey) Several examples were given. The survey results indicated that there were eighteen

(39%) of the forty-six respondents who had worked for other companies that had provided training at the entry level. Of the respondents, twenty-six percent indicated that a classroom discussion period was held about the culture of the organization. Twenty-two percent of respondents indicated that these other employers used stories about the organization's development to relate the culture. One person did add the comment that a previous employer had used a videotaped history of that organization (See Table 1).

Table 1- CFEMS Recruits with Culture Training from Previous Employers

	Recruit Class 30 n=26	Recruit Class 31 n=20	Recruit Class 32 n=24	Totals n=70
Total Respondents	15 (57%)	11 (55%)	20 (83%)	46 (66%)
Number having previous OC training with other employer	7 (47%)	5 (45%)	6 (30%)	18 (39%)
What types of methodologies were used to provide this training?				
Classroom discussion	4 (27%)	3 (27%)	5 (25%)	12 (26%)
Handouts	4 (27%)	2 (18%)	1 (5%)	7 (15%)
Web-based info.	0 (0%)	1 (6%)	1 (5%)	2 (4%)
Stories	3 (20%)	5 (45%)	2 (10%)	10 (22%)
Did not apply	7 (47%)	6 (55%)	13 (65%)	26 (57%)

The third research question was “How effective has Chesterfield Fire and EMS been in communicating its culture to entry level members thus far?” In order to assess this, two activities were conducted. The first was an interview with three people who have had responsibility for the last three recruit classes as outlined in the Procedures section. Three people interviewed were the Training Division Director, the Recruit School coordinator, and the lead instructor for the schools.

The first question asked was “What was your role in the training process of the recruits?” The Training Director at that time was a Senior Battalion Chief who continues to be responsible

for the panel that conducts interviews and makes hiring recommendations to the Fire Chief. He has a great deal of influence in who does and does not get a job with the organization. Once into the training process, the Training Director saw one of his primary responsibilities as assuring that the mission, vision, and values of the organization were communicated.

The Captain who was assigned as the Recruit School coordinator has overall administrative responsibility for the school. This Captain is responsible for selecting adjunct instructor staff, providing them with an orientation to assure consistency, and supervision of the instructor staff. He also has limited day to day contact with the Recruits and handles any disciplinary issues.

The Lieutenant was an operational officer on a temporary assignment during the Recruit School. He is the lead instructor and day-to-day contact person for the recruits. This particular person is also the primary “mentor” for these new employees. He had a military background and attempted to utilize his knowledge and skills from that experience to enhance the recruit training process.

The second question asked was “What did you do to ensure that the “culture” of the organization was communicated to these recruits? The Training Director utilized “available” time periods to come into the classroom and have discussions concerning the mission, vision, values, and culture of the organization. These discussions do not appear on the class schedule and are often impromptu sessions held when time permits. Other than possibly providing handouts of the mission, vision, and values, there are no specific handouts and no specific lesson plan used in this presentation.

The Captain also had discussions with the members of the recruit classes. However, one area that he focused on was asking selected instructors to have informal conversations with the

group to discuss the culture. By being responsible for instructor scheduling, he had the opportunity to get specific people involved in these discussions based on their “attitudes”, and ability to communicate the information.

The Lieutenant, as the day-to-day contact, is given a large amount of responsibility for communicating the organizational culture through informal discussions. As the “mentor” for these new hires, he also demonstrates this information by how he treats the recruits. He provides much of the information about fire station life that the employees need to get. The advantage to having a person in this position is that he can provide some warning to people that they will hear some negative comments in the field. He can provide some of the perspective to these negative comments. This particular Lieutenant has begun designing a lesson on history and culture. These deal primarily with the fire service in general, not specifically with this organization. These have been piloted over the past two schools and are still being refined. They deal with a specific topic with some minor research needed as homework in some cases for the recruits.

The third question was “How effective has our recruit training process been in communicating organizational culture to the recruits?” The Training Director feels that the informal approach has worked well. The Training Captain acknowledged that despite the fact that improvement is always possible, the recruits are oriented to the culture early in their careers and this prepares them for moving into the station. The Lieutenant also feels that the culture is communicated; however he does believe that a more formalized approach would be beneficial. He has begun that process through the development of the pilot program.

The second activity conducted was a survey of Recruit Schools 30, 31, and 32 as outlined in the Procedures section. This survey was not intended to provide information that could be statistically inferred to all classes. Rather, the information was desired to measure the relative

success that the organization has had with communicating the culture during the recruit training process. The survey was designed to determine whether the culture and history of the organization were being taught in an organized fashion, and what types of methodologies were employed to support this learning. The survey also intended to determine what factors had contributed to the recruit's knowledge of the culture. These respondents were also asked to recommend methods of instruction for future recruit classes. As a matter of comparison, the survey attempted to gather the same information about any of their previous employers. The survey instrument is included as Appendix A.

This survey was sent to a total of 70 members of the organization. There were a total of 46 surveys returned. This represents a return rate of 67%. The return rate was highest among the most recent class where 83% of the members returned their surveys. (See Table 2)

Overall, 76% of the respondents indicated that there had been a classroom discussion period dedicated to the culture of CFEMS. Members of Class 32 had the highest positive response to this question at 80%. Classes 30 and 31 both had 73% positive responses. Of those who indicated that this session occurred, 46% indicated that the discussion was supported by the instructors relating stories to illustrate the point. Seventeen percent indicated that handouts were used while fifteen percent indicated that instructor comments alone were used. (See Table 2)

Table 2- The teaching of the culture of CFEMS to Recruit Schools 30, 31, 32.

	Recruit School 30	Recruit School 31	Recruit School 32	Overall
Number indicating that Classroom discussion was held on O.C. of CFEMS	11 (73%)	8 (73%)	16 (80%)	35 (76%)
If so, what techniques were used to support this discussion				
Handouts	3 (20%)	3 (27%)	2 (10%)	8 (17%)
Instructor Comments	2 (13%)	1 (9%)	4 (20%)	7 (15%)
Stories	9 (60%)	4 (36%)	8 (40%)	21 (46%)
No discussion	1 (7%)	1 (9%)	2 (10%)	4 (9%)
Cannot recall	2 (13%)	1 (9%)	3 (15%)	6 (13%)

As to the teaching of the history of the organization, which is an important part of the culture, 61% indicated that a classroom period was dedicated to a discussion of the history of the organization. During this discussion, the use of story was employed according to 30% of the respondents. The percentage of responses indicating that stories were used has dropped from a high of 47% to a low in the most recent school of 20%. Twenty-four percent indicated that instructor comments only were used to teach this material while twenty percent indicated that written handouts were used. Thirty-seven percent of the respondents from school 31 indicated that they could not recall if any aids were used to teach the topic. (See Table 3.)

Table 3- The teaching of the culture of CFEMS to Recruit Schools 30, 31, 32.

Number indicating that classroom discussion was held on history of CFEMS	8 (53%)	7 (67%)	13 (65%)	28 (61%)
If so, what techniques were used to support this discussion				
Handouts	1 (7%)	1 (9%)	7 (35%)	9 (20%)
Instructor Comments	2 (13%)	3 (27%)	6 (30%)	11 (24%)
Stories	7 (47%)	3 (27%)	4 (20%)	14 (30%)
No discussion	2 (13%)	0 (0%)	2 (10%)	4 (9%)
Cannot recall	3 (20%)	4 (37%)	2 (10%)	9 (20%)

The next question asked the respondents to identify which of several factors had contributed to their knowledge about the culture of Chesterfield Fire and EMS. Overall, there were 67% of the respondents who agreed that once assigned to the station, the discussions with their fellow shift members had contributed. Fifty-nine percent indicated that instructors during recruit school had contributed to their knowledge. Forty-six percent indicated that they had heard information from other members prior to joining the organization. (See Table 3)

The lowest responses for this question were information from and discussion with their Battalion Chief (20%), written information provided during Recruit School (20%), and recruiting information accessed before being hired (9%). (See Table 4)

Table 4- How recruits are influenced regarding the organizational culture of CFEMS

	Recruit School 30	Recruit School 31	Recruit School 32	Overall
Recruiting info	2 (13%)	2 (18%)	0 (0%)	4 (9%)
Discussion w/members before being hired	7 (47%)	6 (55%)	8 (40%)	21 (46%)
Written info in recruit school	2 (13%)	1 (9%)	6 (30%)	9 (20%)
Instructor discussion	8 (53%)	6 (55%)	13 (65%)	27 (59%)
Shift discussion	12 (80%)	8 (73%)	11 (55%)	31 (67%)
Stories	8 (53%)	6 (55%)	6 (30%)	20 (43%)
Discussion with Company Officer	6 (40%)	4 (37%)	7 (35%)	17 (37%)
Discussion with Battalion Chief	5 (33%)	1 (9%)	3 (15%)	9 (20%)
Discussion with Executive Staff	6 (40%)	1 (9%)	6 (30%)	13 (28%)

Another question was posed to attempt to put effectiveness into perspective. The respondents were asked whether this was their first fire service job. Members of Recruit School 30 responded that 80% of them were beginning their fire service careers. Graduates of Recruit School 31 responded that 55% were being initiated into a career department. And finally, members of Recruit School 32 reported that 90% were entering their first fire service job. Overall there were 78% of the respondents in this category. Survey respondents were also asked if their interpretation of the organization's culture has been influenced by those who had related it to them. Overall, fifty-nine percent indicated that it had been.

The fourth research question was "What methods or approaches might enhance and increase the effectiveness of Chesterfield Fire and EMS in communicating its culture to new members?" The subjects of the survey were asked to recommend methodology for future Recruit School training in organizational culture. Several options were given as well as the ability to provide comments. Sixty-three percent favored the use of a compilation of stories about the organization's development and how it related to the culture. In addition, 61% felt that

there should be a classroom discussion period about organizational culture. One respondent did specify that an early station visit would be helpful, to see the culture in practice. (See Table 5)

Table 5- Recommended Methods to instruct organizational culture to future recruit schools

	Recruit School 30	Recruit School 31	Recruit School 32	Overall
Classroom discussion	9 (60%)	7 (67%)	12 (60%)	28 (61%)
Handouts	3 (20%)	3 (27%)	7 (35%)	13 (28%)
Web-based	2 (13%)	5 (45%)	2 (10%)	9 (20%)
Stories	10 (67%)	9 (82%)	10 (50%)	29 (63%)
Other	1 (7%)	0 (0%)	1 (5%)	2 (4%)

The research has shown that there is an abundance of different techniques utilized by other organizations. Any of them could be applicable to this question. Based on the above data, it would appear that previous recruits would favor an official classroom session dedicated to the culture of the organization and the use of stories to illustrate the points.

Discussion

The first research question was, what is the culture of an organization and how is it described? Numerous definitions were located for organizational culture. Although many seemed to be very close in terminology there were some differences that were interesting.

Most definitions seemed to agree that assumptions, values, and beliefs were integral parts of the culture of the organization. In its discussion of organizational culture, the National Fire Academy says that it is "...the assumptions (values and beliefs)..." (NFA, 1998, p.7-3). Another example is "Culture is comprised of assumptions, values, norms and tangible signs of the organization..." (McNamara, 1999, p.1). "Culture is the shared assumptions, beliefs..." (Toolpack, 2003, para. 1).

History is also an important part of the concept of organizational culture. Without a firm understanding of the organization's history, the cultural context is not going to be understood.

Schein “believes that organizations with history have a culture” (Schein, n.d.). The question as to how the organization developed this particular culture can often be answered through a good understanding of the history. Frieberg and Frieberg (1996) define culture as the “present manifestation of the past: the challenges, successes, mistakes, and lessons learned. Culture becomes the organization’s memory.” (p. 145) They also state that “The company’s character is rooted in its legendary beginnings; in fact, it is virtually impossible to understand the people, the culture, and the inner workings of Southwest Airlines without first understanding its past”. (Frieberg and Frieberg, 1996, p. 145) Their book, *Nuts!* describes the culture of Southwest Airlines. Southwest is known for its family atmosphere and for their ability to work as a team and to enjoy their jobs. Without knowing the history of the organization, it would be difficult to understand this culture in a business. But, when you consider that the concept for the company was drawn on a cocktail napkin; and that in the early years, they had to overcome legal hurdle after legal hurdle to stay in business; and that their operating principles are contrary to other major airlines, it is easy to see that they are indeed, different (Frieberg and Frieberg, 1996).

Understanding the culture is critical to the success of an organization. In today’s fire service, high customer service standards and concerns are critical. Phoenix Fire Department is known across the nation as a leader in customer service. Its prospective members can learn about this before ever applying by visiting their website and reading the *PFD Way*. This document provides a very clear understanding of what the members value, and what is expected of all members (Phoenix, 2002b).

Implementing change in an organization requires an understanding of the culture. Fire service organizations in today’s society are undergoing constant change. From adding services, to changing work force demographics, these are all changes that can be difficult if the culture of

the organization works against it. Stephen Covey (1992) said that if a manager was to attempt to implement performance agreements, he would need to consider the existing culture of the organization. D. Larry Fraser (1998), in an article about standardized programs states, “The degree to which they are in harmony with the organization’s culture in which they reside has a great deal to do with how they are regarded and how well they achieve their purpose” (Overview, item 2).

In order to make changes, the culture must be considered and changes must be worked within the culture, or the culture must be changed. Chesterfield Fire and EMS has seen this type of “resistance” to change because of the culture of the organization. Previous administrations were less likely to consider input from the field. Therefore, when input was requested by the current administration, it was slow in coming and there was a feeling that it would not be used once submitted. As the organization has attempted to implement Strategic Planning and Business Plans, there has been reluctance because “we are not a business” according to most front-line personnel.

This researcher agrees with Richard Seel in that culture does change. Mr. Seel (2000) states that “organizational culture is the emergent result of the continuing negotiations about values, meanings and proprieties between the members of that organization and with its environment.” (p.2)

As the background and culture of the individual member changes, so will the organizational culture. Each generation of new firefighter brings new perspectives and traits that will impact the culture of the organization. Mr. Gerry Johnson’s cultural web talks about different aspects of culture being held together by the member’s paradigms, or core beliefs. In other words the member’s core beliefs will affect how they view the stories, routines, rituals, power structures,

etc. that are an important part of the cultural web. (Johnson, 1992) They each put their own “spin” on things. As demographics change within an organization, the overall paradigm of the organization will change.

This researcher believes that the definition presented in the results section is a fair and accurate representation of the majority of the definitions that were researched.

The second research question was how do other organizations communicate their culture to new entrants? Perhaps as important as being able to define the culture is how to communicate it. Southwest Airlines has a Culture Committee, whose job it is to keep the culture alive and well and to communicate it through the organization (Frieberg and Frieberg, 1996). However, they begin the process of indoctrination before you apply. They begin this in their recruitment information. Southwest recruits for attitude and trains for skill (Frieberg and Frieberg, 1996). They attempt to bring the right people in to apply for the jobs. Some may view their ads and brochures as lacking in professionalism. Those individuals would not do well in that business and therefore should not apply.

So the question now becomes, how successful is Southwest Airlines at communicating the culture of the organization. Frieberg and Frieberg (1996), describe Southwest as “a genuine American success story” (p. 4). “Southwest Airlines is the only U.S. airline to earn a profit every year since 1973” (Frieberg and Frieberg, 1996, p. 4). They have performed well on the stock market, have shown steady growth, and generally have the lowest fares in most markets that they serve (Frieberg and Frieberg, 1996). A major indicator of cultural success includes the fact that in most measurable areas, they have the most productive work force, serving “twice the number of passengers per employee of any other airline” (Frieberg and Frieberg, 1996, p.7). They have the lowest turnover rate among airlines (4.5%). “The airlines industry has laid off

more than one hundred and twenty thousand people since 1989” (Frieberg and Frieberg, 1996, p.7) and many more with the recent bankruptcies and post 9/11 travel declines. Yet, Southwest has only furloughed three employees in their history. Those three employees were immediately hired back as soon as a temporary cash crunch subsided. Lastly, in what may be the most important category, Southwest has led the way in customer service for years. They are the only airline to win the “Triple Crown” (based on baggage handling, on-time performance, and customer complaints) since it began in 1987. (Frieberg and Frieberg, 1996) In this researcher’s opinion, Southwest has a culture for success and communicates it very well.

General Electric also attempts to communicate its culture to the prospective employee but through its web site. On the career page of its site, GE indicates that they are looking for “top talent” (GE, 2002a, index, para.1). They go further by providing the prospective employee with reasons to select a career at their company. Reasons that they list include diversity (of businesses and culture), global focus, good communications, commitment to developing their people, and an environment that encourages free exchange and sharing of information with all aspects of the company (GE, 2002a). If you read the book entitled *jack, straight from the gut*, written by Jack Welch, you see these attributes very clearly are, and have been an important part of the culture of GE for many years. This book illustrates the various mergers that have been used to diversify the company, the fact that a global focus has been instrumental in changing the business, the boundaryless culture that provides a free exchange of ideas throughout the company, and the use of the Crotonville training facility to provide on-going training and personnel development (Welch, 2001). Having read the book previously, this researcher flashed back to its pages when viewing the GE website. They clearly define the culture for the prospective member.

Phoenix Fire Department also provides information on their web site. Included in this site is the full text of *PFD Way* which is the written version of their culture. Prospective members can read it before applying, and are issued the document once hired. It is further explained in the recruit training process. In the document, it explains that people often ask what it is that makes the organization so unique. The response that is given is “It is our people and our philosophy... ‘The PFD Way’ was developed with the intent of describing this Departmental Philosophy” (Phoenix, 2002b, introduction, para. 2). This document is an impressive collaboration between labor and management to explain the values that the organization holds dear. It is very clear to anyone reading it, what the philosophy of the organization is. Of course, one has to assume that the members buy-in and walk the talk. Most people, when asked about Phoenix, speak highly of their organization and their commitment to customer service. It would appear that they are successful in communicating the culture.

Walt Disney World uses the classroom approach with its “Disney Traditions” program. This program is a mandatory program for all new employees. It is approximately 12 hours of instruction in how to present a good show, and Disney is all about good show. In addition, they have their new employees circulate through the parks on their own to observe employees interaction with guests and to see first-hand what makes Disney so special. (Burkell, 1995)

This researcher has had the good fortune to visit Walt Disney World on several occasions. It was obvious from the very first interactions with “cast members” that customer service was their focus. It is difficult to recall any bad experiences. Is that because there were none? It probably was because they were so overshadowed by the positive experiences? Either way, the overall experience is such that you want to return. This is a good measurement of success in communicating the culture. The ingredients are there for bad experiences- too many

people, expensive prices, oppressive heat (depending on the time of year), yet the cast members seem to be able to work through these and maintain their consistency in purpose and performance.

The third research question was intended to determine how effective CFEMS has been in communicating its culture to entry level members thus far? In order to answer this, it is necessary to know which techniques the organization currently uses. The organization currently maintains a page on the County web site. This page provides numerous links to informational pages for citizens. There is some recruitment information such as salary, position description, electronic application, and a brief listing of training opportunities once hired. The site also lists the Mission, Vision and Strategic Goals of the organization (Chesterfield, 2003a).

Unfortunately, it is not the most current versions. The original versions do not adequately communicate what the organization is all about. The updated versions do a much better job, yet are not posted for the public to see. The organization also has a listing of key values that is not included on the site. Because the site is lacking in the most up-to-date information, a potentially valuable method of communicating important components of the culture is lost.

Chesterfield Fire and EMS utilizes a three-person interview panel to interview applicants. The same three people conduct all interviews during the hiring process and have done so for several years. This team compiles a list of good candidates based on the interviews and submits names for background checks. Assuming that the checks come back with no problems, these names are submitted to the Chief in order for him to extend job offers. In discussions with the leader of this interview team it is obvious that they believe in the theory of hiring for attitude, not skill. He explains that the team weighs attitude heavily. It is their belief that it is easier to take an untrained applicant with a positive attitude and make a good employee, than it is to do so with a

trained applicant with a bad attitude (Bucher, Personal Communication). This tendency is supported by results from the recruit survey that was conducted within the organization. During the survey, the recruits were asked if their job with CFEMS was their first job in the fire service. Overall, 78% of the recruits indicated that this was their first fire service job. The highest percentage was Recruit School 32 with 90%. The low was Recruit School 31 with 55%. Overall however, it is apparent that the organization places high priority on traits other than previous fire service experience. This serves to introduce the applicant to some components of the culture.

According to the interview conducted with the Training Director and the Captain responsible for the recruit training process, informal classroom discussions are held on the organization's mission, vision, values, and culture. This occurs through "mini" lectures and discussion through the adjunct instructor staff. Seventy-six percent of the recruits could recall this on the survey. If only 76% of the recruits can recall a discussion of culture, this researcher does not believe that the technique currently employed is as effective as it needs to be. However, only 61% of the recruits could recall a similar discussion of the organization's history. (Table 3) It has been shown in previous discussions that history and culture go hand in hand. Frieberg and Frieberg write "Culture becomes the organization's memory" (1996, page 145).

In 1979, when this researcher began his fire service career with CFEMS, the history of the organization was not only taught in a formal environment, but handouts were provided and the subject was tested in written exams. Although there is currently an attempt to bring about a more formal history lesson, it focuses on the overall history of the fire service (Kemp, 2002). A formal lesson specific to this organization is needed.

When surveyed, the recruits listed discussions with their respective shifts (67%) and information gained from other CFEMS members before being hired (46%), as two of the top

three methods by which they learned about the culture of the organization. The other response was discussions with instructors during recruit training (59%) (See Table 4). Therefore, most of their exposure to the culture is coming from the members instead of coming from their specific leaders. Although hearing this information from their peers is important, it should not be the first or the most prevalent method of communicating the culture. In the survey, 59% of the respondents indicated that their interpretation of the culture had been influenced by those who had related it to them. This can be good or bad, depending on who is relating the information. If a member who was disciplined years ago, or transferred against their will is relating information about history and culture, it is a strong possibility that the information will be slanted in a negative fashion. Should the organization rely on these members to instill the culture in its recruits? This researcher thinks not. With the growing number of retirements each year, it is possible to have an officer with less than ten years on the job, and the senior firefighter having only three years on the job. This shift cannot accurately relate the history of the organization because they didn't live it.

There were some other interesting responses gained regarding the most influential sources of information about the culture. Although the Executive Staff (Chief and Deputies) meet with each recruit class, only 28% of the overall respondents indicated that this influenced their understanding of the culture. In addition, only 37% indicated that discussions with their direct supervisor (company officer) had been influential. Even fewer (20%) indicated that their Battalion Chief had had any influence on their understanding of the culture. The emergency operations division has within the past year re-organized specifically to allow the Battalion Chiefs more time to spend in the stations with their people. Yet the one recruit class that has graduated since that re-organization had the lowest (15%) responses in this category. This

researcher believes that it is imperative that the leaders of the organization (Executive Staff, Battalion Chiefs, and Company Officers) must be exerting as much influence as the rank and file. This is difficult given the proximity to their peers, but the effort must be put forth. The organization has a story to tell, and the leaders must be the one's telling that story.

The final research question was what methods or approaches might enhance and increase the effectiveness of CFEMS in communicating its culture to new members? The methods that are currently being used could be refined. For example, the web site could be used to provide cultural information simply by providing an updated version of the mission, vision, and values. Making this a marquee area of the web page would allow anyone to see what the organizational culture is. The Phoenix site has abundant information about the organization, including a written history, including those who have died in the line of duty (Phoenix, 2002a). A prospective or new member can gather a great deal of information about the organization through that site. When you look at the GE web site, you get a sense of the culture. You also can read about why you should go to work for GE. The internet is a medium that needs to be taken advantage of.

During a survey of recruits, the question was asked, "Which of the following would you recommend for use during future Recruit Training to introduce recruits to the organizational culture?" Sixty-one percent of the respondents indicated that a classroom discussion period would be beneficial (Table 5). The organization can formalize the classroom discussion to include detailed information on history and culture. Rank and file members who serve as instructors can still be used to help tell the story. However, there should be a dedicated time during the first week of training to help introduce the recruits to the culture of the organization. This would fall in line with the successful practices of Walt Disney World and their "Disney Traditions" program (Burkell, 1995). This training should be conducted by leaders of the

organization to emphasize the importance of the topic. The training can be augmented through the use of handouts or even a videotape that shows members living the culture. One respondent in the survey recommended specifically that the videotape be used. A follow-up session could include station visits at various points of the school during which a ride-along can occur, and discussions could be held to better explain the culture. This again would follow along the practices of Walt Disney World by exposing the recruits to the “real world” where they can see the culture in action. Disney allows their new hires to wander the park looking for examples of “good show” and “bad show”. (Burkell, 1995)

During the survey of recruits, 63% responded that a compilation of stories about the organization’s development and how they relate to the culture would be a good way to communicate the culture during the next recruit school. (Table 5) Members are currently using stories to relate the culture. Unfortunately, the stories may not be the best ones to illustrate the culture. Stories are a part of fire station life and follow members around throughout their career. The organization has to identify the “best” stories available and use those to teach the culture.

An important part of the use of story to illustrate a point is the storyteller. Since primitive times, the tribal storyteller has been critical in spreading the history and culture of the tribe. The storyteller, known as the shaman, provides the link with the past that allows the tribe to continue to survive. Herb Kelleher, CEO of Southwest Airlines, is described as the shaman of Southwest. Phil Condit, president and CEO of Boeing, is quoted as saying that “I think Herb is Southwest’s shaman; he is the storyteller, and those stories get repeated and retold and they form the fabric of the Southwest culture.” Condit goes on to say “Stories are powerful because we remember them” (Frieberg and Frieberg, 1996, page 164).

This is however, a skill that must be developed in the future leaders so that it will continue to occur. Condit further states “I have watched Herb tell stories: he watches the reaction of people and his story then takes on new and different nuances depending upon his audience and the reaction he is hoping for” (Frieberg and Frieberg, 1996, page 164). The organization must take this responsibility seriously and work to train these shamans. This should be a part of leadership training in the organization.

Chesterfield Fire and EMS has a strong history and a culture that any organization would be proud of. Unfortunately, the results of this study show that the organization does not communicate this culture to incoming members as efficiently as it should. The recruit training process has weeks of training on firefighting skills and practices, as well as EMS and rescue skills. However, there is no dedicated place on the schedule to teach these impressionable members about the culture of the organization. Much more emphasis must be placed on developing and using a planned program on culture. The cultural education of the recruits should begin early with emphasis from the leaders of the organization. It must be on-going, using various techniques and viewpoints. But it cannot be left to chance. As the members of the organization get older and begin to retire, the culture will change. However, by having a strong cultural educational program in place, the basic values that the organization has been successful with will remain in place.

Recommendations

Based on this study, several recommendations will be made. These recommendations are intended to improve the communication of the organizational culture to future entry-level members of Chesterfield Fire and EMS. It will require a multi-faceted approach to the problem to make a significant impact.

The first recommendation is that the organization should define its culture by identifying and putting into written form the components of the culture and organizational history that need to be taught to entry level members. There are many components to the culture. Some of these will be observed over the course of the recruit training process. However, there are critical components that should be presented in an organized fashion to the recruits, early in their career. Currently, these are not well-defined, nor are they taught in an organized manner to these new members.

The second recommendation is that an overall cultural training and indoctrination plan be developed to provide culture training to this audience. This plan should incorporate classroom-based training, handout material, use of videotape, and other media as well. Leaders of the organization should make the primary delivery of this information as this will stress its importance. This class should be taught during the first week of recruit training and should be a part of the school schedule. Once this initial delivery is made, instructors in the recruit school should continue to be encouraged to share cultural information with these students. Two to three times during the course of the recruit school, the recruits should spend a few hours in the stations, directly observing the culture in practice.

The third recommendation is to use the components of culture that will be identified to produce a videotaped program to allow members to describe the organization's story from their perspective. This has been done previously, as a part of a back-injury prevention program. This particular videotape was well-received and can allow the members to participate in the delivery of the story to these new firefighters. Hearing these descriptions and anecdotes from the rank and file can help to ingrain these concepts into the minds of these new members who are most

impressionable. Careful selection of those who participate in the videotape will enhance its usefulness.

The fourth recommendation is that the organization should work to compile the official story of Chesterfield Fire and EMS. The organization is just beginning to see a large amount of retirements. These retiring members are among the first career firefighters in the organization. Much of the history of the organization will leave when they do. This is the time to have someone write a well-documented narrative of how the organization started and has grown through the years. This can also include some of the legends and anecdotal examples of the development of the culture of the organization. It is further suggested that a journalism student from a local university might be interested in writing this document as a part of their research in the degree program.

The fifth recommendation is that the Company Officers and Battalion Chiefs receive training in relating the culture to the recruit firefighters. Once the recruit school has graduated, the reinforcement of the culture should not be primarily left up to the firefighters in the station. The first line supervisor and the middle managers must be a larger component in the teaching of the culture than is currently the case. Strong leadership may be able to offset any negative perceptions that some shift members will attempt to instill.

The sixth recommendation is that once the above recommendations have been implemented, the organization's web site should be further developed to provide this history and cultural information for the citizens and prospective members to access. This can assist in recruiting people who want to be a part of the strong culture of CFEMS.

Any future study of this issue should attempt to measure the differences between the cultural perception of the more senior members of the organization and the cultural perception of

the recently graduated recruits who were the target of this study. This will help to determine what message is currently being transmitted to these entry-level members when they arrive on a shift.

In addition, if any recommendations are implemented that are applicable to the recruit schools, a similar survey to the one used here should be given to the recruits shortly after graduating. This will help to measure the success of the training.

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Appendix A- Recruit Firefighter Survey and Cover Letter

Cover Memorandum

TO: Members of Recruit Classes 30, 31, and 32

FROM: Battalion Chief Mark Sacra

DATE: May 21, 2003

SUBJECT: ENCLOSED SURVEY

As a requirement for successful completion of the Executive Fire Officer Class “Executive Development” at the National Fire Academy, I have to complete an applied research project. I would like to enlist your assistance with this.

I chose to conduct my research on methodologies for communicating organizational culture to entry level personnel. I believe that as our organization faces a significant increase in retirements, this will be of critical importance to us. In order to determine the success that our organization is currently having in this area, I would like to ask you to complete the enclosed survey.

The survey should take no more than ten minutes to complete. Your responses will remain anonymous. I do need to receive as many replies as possible in order to validate the responses. Please take a few minutes to complete the survey, place it back in an interoffice mailer, and address it to my attention in Fire Administration. I would ask that you complete this and return it to me by June 6, 2003.

Thank you for your assistance with this project. If you have any questions please feel free to send me a GroupWise message or contact me at 768-7516 during normal business hours, or at 530-3846 in the evenings.

**EXECUTIVE DEVELOPMENT APPLIED RESEARCH PROJECT
RECRUIT CLASS SURVEY
“ORGANIZATIONAL CULTURE”**

The purpose of this survey is to evaluate the effectiveness of current techniques of communicating organizational culture within Chesterfield Fire and EMS to incoming employees. Please complete the survey by circling the appropriate response or letter. If you have additional comments, please make them at the end of the survey.

Please use the following as a working definition of “organizational culture:”

“Organizational culture is the personality of the organization. Culture is comprised of the assumptions, values, norms and tangible signs (artifacts) of organization members and their behaviors” (Taken from “Organizational Culture”, written by Carter McNamara, PhD).

1. During your Recruit School training was there a classroom period dedicated to a discussion of the “culture” of Chesterfield Fire and EMS?

YES

NO

2. If there was a session dedicated to a discussion of “culture”, which of the following were used to support the discussion?

- A. Written notes or handouts provided as supporting materials
- B. Instructor comments only
- C. Instructor relating stories to the class illustrating the culture
- D. No discussion of organizational culture
- E. Cannot recall if any were used.

3. During your Recruit School training was there a classroom period dedicated to a discussion of the history of Chesterfield Fire and EMS?

YES

NO

4. If there was a session dedicated to a discussion of the history of CF&EMS, which of the following were used to support the discussion?

- A. Written notes or handouts provided as supporting materials
- B. Instructor comments only
- C. Instructor relating stories to the class illustrating the history
- D. No discussion of organizational history
- E. Cannot recall if any were used

10. Is this your first fire service job?

YES

NO

11. Which recruit school were you a member of?

A. 30

B. 31

C. 32

COMMENTS: _____

Appendix B- Recruit School Leader Interview Questions

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS FOR RECRUIT SCHOOL LEADER ROLES

1. What was your role in Recruit Training?
2. What did you do to ensure that the “culture” of the organization was communicated to these recruits?
3. How effective has our recruit training process been in communicating organizational culture to the recruits?