



By KIMBERLY ALYN, Ph.D.

Using Your Core Values to Evaluate Behavior

Design a 360-Degree Evaluation to Create a Solid Foundation

In my two previous columns, I talked about organizational values and personal values. Having strong clarity in these two areas creates the highest levels of organizational commitment. So now that your department has created a strong foundation of organizational values and personal values, how do you create accountability to those values?

Most disciplinary problems are behavioral problems, not performance issues. Many fire departments have clearly articulated core values, but firefighters are rarely evaluated on how they live out those core values on a daily basis. What is the point of your organizational values and personal values if they are not used as the yardstick that all behavior is measured against? If your company officers are conducting subordinate-counseling sessions with firefighters on attitude and behavior issues and the company officers are not tying in the core values of your department, they're not doing it right.

I met with a fire chief who was venting some of his frustrations with a lack of accountability and responsibility in his department. He said, "It just seems like few people make themselves accountable for their actions and no one wants to take responsibility, especially with some of our command staff who are supposed to be setting the example as role-model leaders. We expect everyone in the department to act as a leader, whether formal

or informal. But how can we expect that if the leaders who are furthest up in the chain of command aren't doing that themselves? How do I create more accountability?"

I said, "Let me ask you this: of the following choices, who do think has the most accurate assessment as to the effectiveness of someone's leadership skills: their subordinates, their managers or their peers?"

He said, "Their subordinates."

"Who would be second?"

"Their peers."

"Who would be last?"

"Their managers."

"Who evaluates every member of your department?"

"Their managers."

What's wrong with this picture? The light bulb came on for him and I explained the concept of a 360-degree evaluation. This type of evaluation gets input from subordinates, managers, peers and sometimes even members of the public or other city departments the firefighter comes into contact with. Do you think when people know that everyone around them will be part of their evaluation process that accountability to the core values will go up? You bet it will! One reason some managers treat their employees poorly is because there is no accountability. Do you think if managers who treat their employees poorly know their employees will be evaluating them as well as their managers they would take responsibility to change their behavior? I guarantee they would.

In my discussion with the fire chief, I

asked what the core values of his department are. He said they are teamwork, professionalism, integrity, diversity, respect and excellence. I showed him how they

should be the foundation of a 360-degree evaluation.

The main categories are the core values and the sub-categories of the evaluation are behaviors that reflect alignment with the core values. For example, under "Respect" could be an evaluation of the following behav-

iors: Treats subordinates with respect, acts in a manner that earns respect, treats everyone with importance regardless of their differences and models respect up and down the chain of command.

The values of your department should be the basis and foundation of your evaluations. A 360-degree evaluation will collect input up, down and across the chain of command on how well people live out the core values of the organization as well as their own personal core values. It should be conducted on every member of your fire department, starting with your fire chief (setting the example of asking for constructive input) and funneling all the way down to the front line.

Even if your department doesn't adopt this type of evaluation on a formal basis, you can initiate it on yourself on an informal basis. Design your own 360-degree evaluation that uses your department's core values as a foundation and ask people to give you input. It will make you a much better formal or informal leader.

Many fire departments have clearly articulated core values, but firefighters are rarely evaluated on how they live out those core values on a daily basis.

KIMBERLY ALYN, Ph.D., is a best-selling author and an international fire service speaker. She is the owner of Fire Presentations (www.FirePresentations.com), a company dedicated to keynote presentations and training workshops for the fire service. Dr. Alyn has conducted the largest known fire service study on the topic of leadership and works with fire departments across the country on firefighter and officer development. She is the author of 11 books and a variety of CD/DVD productions. Dr. Alyn holds a bachelor's degree in management, a master's degree in organizational management and a doctorate degree in management with a speciality in leadership. Dr. Alyn can be reached at: 800-821-8116 or email Kim@FirePresentations.com.

