

Assessing a Standardized Promotional Process in the Jackson Township Fire Department

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CERTIFICATION STATEMENT

I hereby certify that the following statements are true:

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ABSTRACT

A problem that exists in the JTFD is the promotional process. There is not a standardized promotional process used within the Jackson Township Fire Department (JTFD) that occurs from promotion to promotion. The purpose of this study was to determine if a standard promotional process would be beneficial to the JTFD. The following questions were answered by this descriptive research: What are the current practices in other Ohio township promotional processes, how are other similar type and size departments doing promotional processes, what are the benefits of standardizing the promotional process and is a standardized promotional process favorable to JTFD. The literature review was supplied from many books and journal articles. This examined the many facets of promoting personnel and the moral, measurable and legal aspects of the process.

The author then developed two surveys: one to address the research questions of current practices to show how other type and size departments are doing a promotional process, and one to evaluate the wishes and beliefs of the JTFD members on how different aspects of the promotional process are performed. The data results were compared with the research questions and evaluated for further information. After discussion of the collected data, it was recommended that the current JTFD promotional process is not optimal. The recommendation from the author is that a measurable promotional process should be implemented using several testing components. Furthermore, the test scoring should be utilized to formulate a candidate ranking that is used to assist in the selection of promotional candidates.

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INTRODUCTION

Statement of the Problem

A problem that exists in the JTFD is the promotional process. There is not a standardized promotional process used within the Jackson Township Fire Department (JTFD) that occurs from promotion to promotion. With the exception of a written test for captain, there is not a system in place for which a candidate can prepare for in advance.

Personnel aspiring to promote do not have an identified career path to follow. If superior officers are asked how to prepare for a promotion, the answers vary from person to person. There are no standard books to study, no promotional testing procedures in which to prepare for, or any performance standards in which to master. In short, there are no personal or career goals for which to strive. This forces an aspiring officer to either “roll the dice and see what happens” or create his/her own career path. Neither option necessarily puts the applicant in the right direction toward becoming a successful candidate.

Having a standard promotional process could rectify some of the uncertainty of the situation for potential candidates.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to determine if a standard promotional process would be beneficial to the JTFD. Upon completion, the findings and recommendations will be presented to the Chief of Department for review/approval. If a standardized promotional process is recommended, then the use of this research and associated surveys can serve as a starting point in the development of the process guidelines.

Research Questions

The following questions will be answered by this descriptive research:

1. What are the current practices in other Ohio township promotional processes?
2. How are other similar type and size departments doing promotional processes?
3. What are the benefits of standardizing the promotional process?
4. Is a standardized promotional process favorable to JTFD?

BACKGROUND AND SIGNIFICANCE

Jackson Township is located in Stark County, Ohio. It is a suburban type area located between Akron and Canton. The township consists of residential, industrial, commercial and retail shopping areas. The residential population is estimated to be approximately 42,000 people. During peak times of the year, notably the Professional Football Hall of Fame festivities and the Christmas shopping season, it is estimated that the population is over 100,000 people.

The Jackson Township Fire Department was formed in 1952. At that time, Jackson Township was mostly a 36 square mile rural residential area. Until then, fire protection was given by surrounding communities. The newly formed Jackson Township Fire Department was staffed by volunteer firefighters. As the Township demographics changed and became more populated, so did the needs of the fire department. JTFD's first career member was hired in 1972.

Today, JTFD is a combination department consisting of both career and part-time fire personnel. We have an authorized strength of 74 career, and up to 35 part-time fire personnel operating out of five fire stations. The authorized career strength consists of 63 field personnel. At the time of this writing, 68 of the total career positions are filled. The career staff personnel consist of a Chief of Department, two Deputy Chiefs, two Administrative Assistants, four Fire Inspectors, a Fire Prevention Bureau Captain, and a Training Captain. Career shift, or field personnel consist of three Battalion Chiefs, 15 Captains, and 45 Firefighter/Paramedics. Field personnel are divided into three battalions. Each battalion is led by a Battalion Chief overseeing five station Captains. Each station is led by a Captain who is responsible for two - seven firefighters/paramedics. The outside firehouses have a Captain and two firefighter/paramedics with the central station consisting of a Captain and two to seven Firefighter/Paramedics. Adding

two part-time Firefighter/EMTs to the shift, the central station Captain can supervise up to nine firefighters.

The Township is governed by a Board of Trustees. These three part-time Trustees are elected officials with alternating terms. The elected part-time Fiscal Officer oversees the financial matters of the Township. The Township Administrator is a career employee that is responsible for all Township departments including fire, police and public works.

The Jackson Township Fire Department is funded by a fire levy. There is also some revenue in EMS billing and occasionally grant funding. The total budget number for the year 2013 is \$10,127,191. Of that total budget amount, \$8,136,400 is for personnel costs or roughly 80%. The remaining \$1,990,791 is for operational costs.

Chief Ted Heck (ret.) was the first career Fire Chief of Jackson Township. He served as Fire Chief from 1975 to 2011. He explained that all early promotions were tested, which were in the mid 1970's. They included written tests proctored by a testing board made up of professionals from within the community. The testing board was in effect until the mid 1990's. The promoted positions from the mid 1970s to the mid 1990s were Captains and three Assistant Chiefs. The Captain positions included a written test and often an assessment center. In the mid 1990s, two of the three Township Trustees were against any money being spent on assessment center testing. They wanted complete power and saw no reason to spend money to find out what other people thought of the promotional candidates. Since that time, the Trustees have never really agreed on a standard procedure for the promotional process. They do, by majority, seem to want to retain power of promotions and personnel involvement. This is further evidenced by the verbiage on all job postings that cite Ohio Revised Code Section 505.38 "to provide for the

employment of such firefighters as it considers best” in their sole determination of what, if any, firefighters will be promoted.

The current practice is that every employee hired (including part-time seasonal help in the parks department) is interviewed by the Board of Trustees, Township Administrator, Fiscal Officer and related department head. The same procedure currently exists for any promotion in every township department. In conversation with Chief Hogue (JTFD Chief of Department), this interview process has been done ever since he can remember. He went on to say that for many candidates, it is a short interview to meet the people who will be working for the township. For higher ranking employees, the interview is longer and more intensive for use as a selection tool.

Currently when an opening occurs in the promoted ranks, a job posting is displayed on department bulletin boards. There typically are not a designated number of promotions listed on the job posting. The results are for review purposes toward the choosing of personnel to be promoted to a certain rank.

Historically, there has been a promotional job posting distributed to all JTFD personnel. There has been an application that needs to be submitted by a certain date. The posting lists the required minimum criteria. For Battalion Chief rank and above, there is no test. It is done solely by an interview. The Captain rank is the only promotion to be tested, and a minimum score of 70% is listed. For Captain promotions, textbooks, JTFD Standard Operating Guidelines and Jackson Township Employee Handbook can be listed as material to be tested. The list of textbooks used for the written test is not necessarily the same from test to test. For many years, there was a 30-day notice for the test. In recent years, at the request of the applicants, that has been extended from 30 to 60-90 days.

To be eligible for the Captain promotional process, a candidate needs to be employed full-time for a period of not less than five years. The Captain's process consists of a written test and a follow up interview. The written score consists of the written test results and a written evaluation by the Fire Chief with any extra credit points for seniority and/or a fire based Associate Degree. The Captain procedure is later followed by a 10-minute interview with the aforementioned members present.

The Captain promotion has, from time to time, also included an assessment center component. When used, the Ohio Fire Chiefs' Association has presented the assessment center testing. It has been ½ to 1 day sessions for the top twelve written score applicants. The individual scores and remarks are sent to the applicants as well as the Chief of Department. No scores for JTFD personnel were posted. How the applicant field scored or ranked was distributed by word of mouth if the individual chose to reveal his/her results.

As per the job posting, applicants for Captain who score above a 70% on the written test can continue in the promotional process. Those who do not attain this passing rate are eliminated from the process. Subsequently, the top 12 candidates are typically further evaluated. There is no weight given to any ranking of candidates. Ranking number one theoretically has the same opportunity as ranking number 12. Additionally, there is no weight given to the interview component. In the cases where there was an assessment center test given, there is no stated weight for that testing procedure. It clearly states on the test posting that the testing procedures are for review purposes only and that the Trustees reserve the right to promote any candidate they see fit.

The only documentation of the promotional process is what is stated on the job posting. There is not a written procedural document, policy, or manual on how the promotional process will be exercised.

Many candidates feel that the ranking and/or rules are made up as the process proceeds depending on how certain candidates score. There is no wording of the common “Top three” or “Top five” candidates for review. Any and all candidates are eligible for advancement.

Even when there is a written test, it is not known how much, if any, the written score will count toward the final ranking. Each time a promotional process evaluation occurs, it is slightly to dramatically different from the last.

While their peers view many officers as being promoted fairly based on professional merit and testing scores, the opportunity exists to promote lower standing personnel based on subjectivity.

Promotions for Battalion Chief rank and above are typically done solely by an interview with the same aforementioned members present. This interview is typically 45 minutes in length. The only requirement for application to Battalion Chief rank would potentially be five years in Captain rank. There is no written evaluation of the interview results. The applicant is simply advised of his/her successful promotion or condolences.

Above Battalion Chief rank, the minimum requirements are not historically set. This has only happened on one occasion since the Deputy Chief and Chief of Department positions have been established. On that occasion, there were two Deputy Chief positions and Chief of Department position to be filled. No Battalion Chiefs applied for Deputy Chief promotions and only one for Chief of Department promotion. This was in part due to two of the three Battalion

Chiefs and both Deputy Chiefs at the time retiring. The two Deputy Chief and the Chief of Department positions were filled by Captain rank personnel.

The Trustees entertain the views and/or recommendations of the Fire Chief. The resulting action from the Trustees range from agreeing with the Fire Chief, view the belief that the Chief should run his own department up to disagreeing with the Chief and move to appoint their own preference. Ultimately it is the word of the Trustees that is final. These discussions are held in executive session with the Trustees and the Fire Chief.

With the current promotional procedures in place, each and every candidate for promotion goes into the interview thinking they have a good chance for promotion. Every applicant that does not get promoted is severely disappointed and goes through his/her own grieving process. Many members have witnessed this after numerous promotions over the years. Some bounce back in a reasonable amount of time, others go into a deep depression affecting his/her job performance and attitude. If there is an assessment center testing component, the results are shared with the candidate. Many times, the unsuccessful candidate is not given a clear reason for not being promoted. There is no weighted scoring sheet to show the unsuccessful candidate how he/she fell in the process. Historically, if the candidate schedules a meeting with the Chief of Department, they are told anything from exactly why they were passed over to generic comments such as to just keep trying. Regardless of the content of the meeting, unsuccessful candidates sometimes feel that there was subjectivity in the process. Since there are no clear-cut procedural guidelines, there are times that this has merit.

Since 2011, there has been one Chief of Department promotion, two Deputy Fire Chief promotions, two Battalion Fire Chief promotions, and eight Captain promotions. This was due to many chief grade officers retiring from the fire service. Most of these chiefs had met the Ohio

Deferred Retirement Option Program (DROP) maximum service years. Between 2014 and 2015 there will likely be two Battalion Fire Chief and two Captain promotions.

The cost to the Township for this promotional process since 2012 has only been the fee for the Captain exam written testing procedure. The primary cost of the written exam for the Captain's test on October 22 2010, was \$2020. The cost of the assessment center for the top 12 scoring candidates on January 14 and 15 2011, was \$10,300. The last written exam for the Captain's test on September 13 2012, cost \$2080. The Ohio Fire Chiefs Association conducted these exams. The indirect costs to this promotional process would be unnecessary grievances due to promoted officers' inefficiency. These indirect costs are not easily measured. Grievances are not filed for the promotional process since the members are aware that no laws or contractual language are infringed. The few grievances that are filed are usually after the promotion against the newly promoted officer. Often these grievances are for mismanaging the voluntary and forced overtime procedure when filling overtime shifts. Some may view this as retaliatory, but often it is brought upon by the promoted officer not being prepared for his new position. The grievances proceed through the union contractual grievance procedure, and are often won by the union. This is what some department members feel can be avoided by promoting the best qualified candidate with measurable results. Unfortunately, the monetary cost of grievances is not a very measurable figure. In the JTFD, there is a culture of not filing grievances. For the most part, unfiled grievable actions are handled by verbal discussion with mixed results. Due to the political atmosphere of JTFD promotions, many future promotional candidates are reluctant to file a grievance since it would be viewed as a mark on their record as a troublemaker. While there are some grievances filed, most are not. Another indirect cost of this promotional practice

is poor morale. This cannot be measured in monetary figures, but is certainly a major deterrent to progress and performance in any organization.

By contract, labor/management meetings are scheduled quarterly throughout the year; they can be held more often in order to address issues that arise requiring immediate attention. If there are no labor/management issues, then there is not a meeting. Jackson Firefighter/Paramedic and Captain positions are a union shop organization. The International Association of Firefighters (IAFF) represents all career Firefighter/Paramedic and Captain positions, Local 2280. Local 2280 was established in 1975; original membership consisted of six persons and has grown to its current strength of 68.

As stated in the collective bargaining agreement (CBA), the labor/management meetings are attended by the local president, a Captain representative, and a Firefighter/Paramedic for labor; the Fire Chief, the township administrator, and a township trustee for the management side. To the knowledge of many present and past members, the promotional practice procedure has not been an in depth discussion. In addition, any clarification of the promotional process has not been addressed in a local union contract to date.

Due to the inconsistency of past promotional practices and the problems that reoccur, this research will examine the benefits of having a standard promotional process that will impact the future of promotions at JTFD. The results are meant to strengthen the effectiveness of the promotional process for the future of the department.

LITERATURE REVIEW

When making decisions about promotional candidates, it is widely considered best practice to stick to the qualifications of the candidate. Blau, Meyer (1988) states that efficiency suffers when emotions or personal considerations influence administrative decisions. Shafritz, Russell & Borick (2012) state that if, for example, recruitment and promotions within an organization are based on personal preference or other criteria (such as race or class) rather than competence, the organization's administrative processes will over time become less efficient.

Promotional testing procedures are sometimes put together one or several higher ranking personnel, and not constructed by a verified method. Boyd, Cannon (2008) discuss how to obtain the most out of hiring and promotional exams. The fire service invests an incredible amount of time and research in developing standards, testing equipment and improving on fireground strategies and tactics. There are committees made, specifications set and an enormous amount of time and effort spent to ensure equipment and tests meet or exceed specifications. Conversely, few fire departments take the same amount of time to see that testing procedures are valid and reliable. Too often fire departments lack the research to see that their selection process is reliable for selecting their future leaders who will later determine the success or failure of the department. When the right people are not selected for promotions, the organization suffers. It is of the utmost importance that the best selections tools available are used for promotion selection.

Boyd, Cannon (2008) contend that fire service executives need to concentrate on promoting the best people. Even if a Fire Chief is an expert in many areas of his job, if he/she is unable to select and promote the best people then he/she will be ultimately ineffective, as will the

department as a whole. A Fire Chief that promotes the best people for the job will enhance the likelihood for success and create a strong foundation for the future of the department.

Often times, it is required for candidate eligibility that some level of higher education be completed. Prziborowski (2004) states that it is common for many fire departments to formally require formal education in promotion processes. It can be a prerequisite for promotion or noted as “highly desirable.” Some common requirements are: Associate degree for Lieutenant or Captain, Bachelor degree for Battalion or Division chiefs and up to a Master’s degree for an Assistant Chief or Chief of Department.

On the contrary, Boyd, Cannon (2008) offers that a common mistake when constructing promotional exams is to eliminate potential candidates based on criteria that are neither reliable nor valid. An example of such a criteria is that a candidate must have a two or four year college degree to be eligible for promotion. In this case, a person without a college degree is not even given the opportunity to compete in the process. One has to wonder if it is the paper degree that the department is interested in or the characteristics that the college graduate possesses. A more effective way to screen the candidates is to test for the characteristics associated with the persons with completed degrees. Good organizations are focused on promoting persons with these characteristics that best predict future success and not those who have a completed check off list of items that may or may not have anything to do with becoming a good fire officer.

In addition to higher education, work performance history is a critical area of importance. Prziborowski (2004) is referring as to the subjective portion of promotions, it is important to address the history of one’s work performance. Specifically, this refers to one’s record of being

a team player. Many times a candidate, who has a poor attitude, has been a morale killer or administration antagonists are surprised when they are passed over.

Sullivan (2012) reports that organizational psychologists believe that a person's past performance is the best indicator of their future actions, potential and performance. Past performance and future performance are highly related. He uses the analogy of a racehorse: if a horse wins many races before a certain big race, the odds of that horse winning again are great. If a horse loses many races before the big race, the odds are significantly lowered to match that history.

Sullivan (2012) contends this same analogy can be used in the fire service for promotion assessment. The interview process should be highly weighted as a deciding factor in the promotional process. After a short interview, a judgment is passed and the winner is crowned. What this system lacks is the essential element of assessing predictors of future performance. The assessment is reflective of only that candidate at that time in that place with a candidate's own understanding of those instructions by a single facilitator or board. A more accurate evaluation of a person's future performance would be to use the scientific approach or the collection of data from multiple sources over a longer period of time. The more information collected on a topic, the more accurate the results regarding that topic. Many promotional assessments given over a longer period of time will produce a greater accuracy in evaluating a candidate's performance or abilities. This gathered information would produce a greater prediction of values of future performances.

A benefit of a successful promotional process is feedback to the candidate. Loftus (2007) correlates that a benefit to consider for a standard promotional process with documented results

is that the process makes each candidate aware of his strengths and weaknesses. With this type of comprehensive, unbiased information a candidate is aware of the areas or dimensional elements that need improvement and those that are areas of strength. The candidate then has an opportunity to work on those weaknesses through additional education and specific training exercises and be better prepared when the next promotions are announced. This type of personal commitment benefits not only the individual but also the department.

Prziborowski (2004) discusses that in the hidden aspects of the decision, the Chief does not want to promote a troublemaker. In a sense, the Chief is building his/her “dream team.” He/she wants to know that the newly promoted officer is going to support the mission, uphold the administration, and be a good leader. In addition, the Chief wants to promote someone like himself or herself to carry on the policies and procedures of the department.

Harari (2002) quotes General Colin Powell who stated, “Ultimately, it is people – not plans, systems, structures, or budgets – who make the difference between organizational success and failure.”

Length of the promotional process is of concern. Sullivan (2012) thinks that although a very lengthy process would be able to analyze more data, consideration must be given to the time element and stress of the candidate. It needs to be relative to the assessment for multiple candidates and the assessment board personnel.

Warren (2012) writes that the future of the fire service greatly depends on the wisdom and vision of our leaders. Future leaders must have experience, compassion, education, political tenacity, and creative thinking to be successful officers and department leaders. Effective

leaders need to be respected by the community in which they serve and the many external organizations with which they interact. This is the reason that the methodical process, in which fire service leaders are selected, is used in order to produce distinguished fire service professionals.

The promotional process must match the position for which it is designed to select. Warren (2012) believes that Lieutenant and Captain ranks are the foundation of successful future leaders. The promotional process to these two ranks should be based on experience, training standards and testing models. At chief officer levels, completely different standards are necessary. Promotions to this level affect the entire fire department organization and its future. It is for this reason that additional criteria must be added to the process.

Warren (2012) goes on that there are many methods for selecting officer positions, many of which are flawed in some form or another. Some are overly weighted toward seniority, some have a low passing score requirement for the written test. An example of such would be 65%. Many others are just political appointments. Some methods have biased review panels, while some employ distorted labor union input. Another component would be a flawed evaluation model.

The selection process must be a fair system that every firefighter understands from the first day of his/her career. Every firefighter must know the requirements to become a chief officer, that he/she has the opportunity to become a chief officer, up to the Chief of Department if desired. Firefighters must be encouraged to use their available time to prepare for leadership positions from the onset of their career. In the private sector, this is called “succession planning.” This leadership concept can be adopted in the fire service (Warren, 2012).

Any promotional process for chief officer level positions should be composed of several components that will measure the candidate's ability to effectively lead an organization in today's political and economic environment. These components should be given a point value that can be totaled for a final score to produce a numerical rank of candidates. This system must have consistency from candidate to candidate and from year to year. It starts with an official departmental announcement of the promotional event. It should include the time period in which to apply, the number of officer positions available, and minimum requirements for application. An example of this requirement would be that a minimum of five years experience in rank would be a prerequisite. It is common for a chief officer rank application to require the candidate to hold the Captain rank for five years. Warren (2012)

Warren (2012) suggests that the promotional system should contain the following:

1. Written test passing score of 80% that includes study materials from relevant sources such as department general orders, adopted textbooks, department training bulletins, hazmat operations, department rules and regulations and department standard operating procedures (SOPs.)
2. Completion of National Incident Management System (NIMS) training to 100, 200, 300, and 400 levels.
3. Professional certifications and departmental contributions such as grant writing, Emergency Medical Technician certification, Hazmat technician, dive team, National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) standard 1021, *Standard for Fire Officer Professional Qualifications*, 2009 edition; NFPA 1521, *Standard for Fire Department Safety Officer*, 2008 edition; and NFPA 1041, *Standard for Fire*

Instructor Professional Qualifications, and departmental committees such as SOPs, apparatus/equipment purchase committees, health and safety or awards committees.

4. Educational achievements must be included and encouraged. College credits and degrees should be assigned a point value and added to the scoring.
5. The department should offer training programs regularly that can be assigned a point value and included in the scoring process.
6. An assessment center consisting of three chief officers from neighboring departments should conduct an assessment based on three components of leadership: incident command/fireground tactics and strategies, human resource/discipline and administration management.
7. Submission of a resumé detailing their career and achievements and should be prepared to discuss such with an assessment center panel.
8. A component to subtract points from the candidate's score must be considered. The candidate's disciplinary records would be reviewed. Those who have not kept up with the department's vision will lose points toward career advancement. Candidates that have received departmental discipline will have points subtracted based on the severity of the infraction. A list of infractions and associated point values must be established prior to the implementation of this program. Assignment of point values cannot be arbitrary and must be validated through personnel records.

Warren (2012) believes that evaluating leadership throughout a candidate's career will allow department members time to focus on their career and build skills necessary to

assume leadership positions. A program similar to this will produce effective fire service leaders internally and externally to the fire service.

Our system of government often places amateurs in charge of professionals. This is referring to elected government officials having a part or all of the influence of promoting fire service officers (Angione, 2000). The professionals are the leaders of the fire department who are present to make carefully considered recommendations and offer expert advice to the amateurs regarding the department's direction and who will help get it there.

Angione (2000) goes on to say that at times, promotional decisions are made under pressure from elected government officials. Attempting to prevent this, many jurisdictions rely on an outside agency to assist with the promotional process. Examples of such would be civil service or private testing organizations.

Most civil service, and similar organizations, understand that promotional exams are not foolproof, and allow local authorities the latitude of promoting the top candidates under a rule of three or similar provision (Angione, 2000).

Angione (2000) believes that a jurisdiction can then promote from a group of top ranked candidates. Once the choice is made, the next ranked candidate moves up into consideration and becomes eligible as one of the top group. An example of a possible exception to this rule is when a candidate is a veteran.

Fire chiefs who shy away from using this legitimate tool (passing up the top ranked candidate who feels he is not the best choice for the job) when necessary due to

politics or fear of controversy, are renouncing their responsibility (Angione, 2000). The consequences of improper promotions are the safety of the firefighters, organizational excellence and integrity, and the protection of the citizens of the community.

Angione (2000) warns against tests that are only for pass/fail results. The more job related that test is, the more it will likely identify the well-prepared candidate. In addition, the shorter or easier a test is, the less it will separate the prepared candidates from the casual applicants. In addition, Murtaugh (1994) states that a testing process that only utilizes the written test would appear to be inadequate. There appears to be little connection between the traditional multiple-choice questions and the real life situations that may be found on the fireground, in the field, or in the firehouse.

Jackson Township Personnel Hiring Policy (2001) states, “All personnel decisions are the sole responsibility of the board of trustees. They have the sole authority to make personnel decisions within the Township. Nothing in the policy is designed to delegate that authority. The personnel applications, along with any testing data, interview results, or other pertinent information, will be forwarded to the board for their review. The board, in consultation with the administrator and the department head, will decide which applicant to hire. Prior to being appointed to a position, the individual may be required to successfully pass an evaluation by a certified psychologist as to the general intelligence and as to the psychological condition of the individual as it relates to performance of the duties of the position.”

Fire Chief Posting (2010) is posted internally and lists the position vacancy for Fire Chief (Full-time). It lists the eligibility requirements as a bachelor’s degree in fire

science technology, public administration, business administration, or a closely related field; ten years of experience in fire and emergency medical services with a minimum of five years of supervisory experience in all phases of fire and emergency medical services. Must demonstrate proficiency in personnel leadership, labor relations, budgeting, and incident command. It is then stated and underlined: “Any acceptable equivalent combination of education and experience.”

The Fire Chief posting (2010) lists required certifications, job classification and deadline for response. Applicants are required to submit an application, resumé and cover letter to the township administrator.

The Deputy Fire Chief posting (2011) is posted internally and lists the vacancy for Deputy Fire Chief (Full-time). The eligibility requirements are a minimum rank of fire Captain. It lists the general responsibilities of the job with a minimum desired commitment to the position of three years. In addition, the job classification and deadline for response are listed. Applicants are required to submit an application, resumé and cover letter to the township administrator.

The Battalion Fire Chief Posting (2011) is posted internally and lists the vacancy for Battalion Fire Chief (Full-time.) The eligibility requirements are a minimum rank of fire Captain. It lists the general responsibilities of the job and lists the minimum desired commitment to the position as three years. The job classification and deadline for response are listed. Applicants are required to submit an application, resumé and cover letter to the Township Administrator.

The Captain examination posting (2012) is posted internally and lists the written test procedures for the position. It states, "WRITTEN TEST ONLY." It is for individuals who have completed a minimum of five years continuous full-time service from their career appointment date. The second paragraph states that the only purpose of the procedure is to provide information to the Board (Township Board of Trustees) in the exercise of their discretion pursuant to Ohio Revised Code Section 505.38 "to provide for the employment of such firefighters as it considers best" in their sole determination of what, if any, firefighters will be promoted to Captain. The Board of Trustees do not intend that the establishment of the following informational procedure in any manner affects or modifies the statutory law or delegates any of such authority to any person.

The Captain examination posting (2012) lists the application procedures, date, time and place of written exam, and related textbooks/handbooks for the exam. It also includes provisions for credit for years of full-time service and associate degree hours. No more than 12 of the highest scoring candidates, and those who have obtained a minimum composite score of 70 shall be (at the discretion of the Fire Chief) eligible for temporary assignment for filling vacancies in higher ranks (Captain vacancies.)

The Captain examination posting (2012) states that a panel of chief grade officers shall apprise candidates who successfully obtain a minimum composite score of 70 on the written test. The applicants will be notified in writing of their written test score, points awarded for years of service and/or educational hours of credit, and chief grade officer appraisal. The posting states that the information gathered in the testing process will establish an eligibility list in which candidates will be considered for appointment to

vacancies within the Captain rank. The Trustees shall fill vacant positions in accordance with authority granted to them by Section 505.38 of the Ohio Revised Code (2007.) Finally, the posting states that a psychological test relating to the performance of duties of said position will be passed prior to appointment. The eligibility list shall be active for two years from its official posting date as issued by the Jackson Township Board of Trustees.

Regarding the Fire Chief posting (2010), Deputy Fire Chief posting (2011), Battalion Fire Chief posting (2011) and Captain examination posting (2012) there are no mentions of any testing requirements or other testing mechanisms. The chief grade promotions have never included an assessment center test. The Captain exams have occasionally included an assessment center test. All promotions at any level are after a board interview including the Jackson Township Trustees, Fire Chief, Fiscal Officer and Township Administrator. They at times have included the Township Law Director.

Although Ohio Revised Code Sections 124.45 and 124.46 are often discussed in the promotional atmospheres of fire departments, they do not apply to Jackson Township. They are for statutory rules government typically adopting civil service guidelines or charter city government and possibly creating their own rules. Jackson Township does not have civil service or charter city law and therefore falls under Ohio Revised Code Section 505.38 regarding Township law.

Ohio Revised Code Section 124.45 (2007) states that vacancies in positions above the rank of regular Firefighter in a fire department shall be filled by competitive promotional examinations, and promotions shall be by successive ranks as provided in

this section called promoted ranks. When a vacancy occurs in the promoted rank immediately above the rank of Firefighter, no person shall be eligible to take the examination unless the person has served forty-eight months, not including the person's probationary period in the rank of Firefighter. There must be at least two persons eligible for promotion. In the event that there are not two persons eligible, the forty-eight month service requirement does not apply.

Ohio Revised Code Section 124.45 (2007) describes promotional examinations for positions within a fire department shall relate to those matters that test the ability of the person examined to discharge the particular duties of the position sought and shall include a written testing component. No credit for seniority, efficiency, or any other reason shall be added to the applicant's grade unless the applicant achieves at least the minimum passing grade on the examination without counting that extra credit. There is a mention of the right to appeal examination papers that are thought to be erroneously graded.

Ohio Revised Code Section 124.46 (2007) states that the examinee receiving the highest grade shall be placed first on the eligibility list. If two or more examinees receive the same grade, seniority in the fire department service shall determine the order of their names. The person having the highest position on the list shall be appointed in the case of a vacancy. Eligible lists established shall continue for two years. If a vacancy occurs in the two-year period, the list shall continue for the purpose of filling vacancies. If an eligible list exists and a vacancy occurs that may be filled from the list, the vacancy shall be filled within a period of not more than ten days from the date of the vacancy.

Ohio Revised Code Section 505.38 (2007) states, “The board (Township Board of Trustees) shall provide for the employment of firefighters as it considers best and shall fix their compensation.” This opens the Townships up to have legal authority to hire and promote whomever they wish. Any testing done is therefore only legally required to be used as information for consideration toward promotional appointment.

As stated in Ohio Revised Code Section 505.38 (2007), townships in Ohio are not subject to civil service rules. There are no minimum requirements to perform in a promotional process. Being in a township form of government in Ohio, there are no civil service guidelines or restrictions. The township can legally choose whomever they want to fill officer roles.

After completion of this literature review, it is evident that much has been written on the subject of proper promotional processes. It has been documented that no one single test procedure has the capability of providing the best overall candidate. The overwhelming consensus is that combinations of testing mechanisms should be provided to truly show the genuine strengths and weaknesses of each candidate. To validate the testing procedures, it is common for the promotion process parameters to be understood by all parties at the time of the job posting. The literature promotes that the final test scores are used in the candidate selection process in some predetermined method.

Research Question #3 asks: What are the benefits of standardizing the promotional process? The benefits found by the literature review show that a standardized promotional process will streamline the process by making it more clear, concise and impartial. The promotional steps should be outlined, as well as the test

mechanisms to be employed. The value of different test mechanisms has been defined. Having a standardized promotional process will benefit the Jackson Township Fire Department, not only for the next testing process but also for future promotions in the department.

PROCEDURES

The procedures for this research include two surveys to examine the actions of other similar departments, views of firefighters and officers and how their respective promotional processes are favored.

First, an external survey was given. This was given to 35 similar size and type fire departments in Ohio. This examined the effectiveness, popularity, and procedures of their promotional processes. This survey was sent via email on February 6, 2014. Attached to the email was a web link to take the responder to Survey Monkey. A reminder email was sent on February 21, 2014. The deadline for the surveys to be returned was February 28, 2014.

Second, an internal survey was given to all career JTFD members. The internal survey takes a closer look at the view of the members as to how they prefer the system to work, specifically if and how a standardized system is viewed compared to the current system. The survey was sent out via department email on February 9, 2014. A reminder email was sent on February 21, 2014. The deadline for the surveys to be returned was February 28, 2014.

As both of these surveys were being developed, a pilot group was established to assist in the survey design. They provided feedback to questions, any discrepancies or errors in question wording, and general survey flow. After reviewing the pilot group comments or suggestions, questions were reworded as needed. They then took the surveys via Survey Monkey to complete a “test run.” The pilot group consisted of one

Deputy Chief, three Captains and two Firefighter/Paramedics. After the surveys were completed via Survey Monkey and any adjustments were made, the results were cleared from Survey Monkey and distributed to the actual recipients.

Definition of Terms

Promotional Process The process by which an organization advances an individual in rank or position.

Chief of Department The highest ranking fire officer in the fire department, also termed Fire Chief. “The Fire Chief must possess a broad knowledge of Fire Division administration and modern firefighting and fire prevention methods and techniques. The Fire Chief is ultimately responsible for all department operations and matters” (JTFD job description, 2011).

Deputy Chief The second highest ranking offer position in the JTFD. “A Chief grade officer, the Deputy Chief is assigned to staff or operations. The Deputy Chief of Staff directs the efficient and orderly operations of Fire Prevention, Training, Paramedic Coordination and other personnel not assigned to shifts. The Deputy Chief of Operations oversees apparatus repair, building maintenance, scheduling, work assignments and deadlines” (JTFD job description, 2011).

Battalion Chief The third highest ranking officer position in JTFD. “A Chief grade officer, the shift commander involves both supervisory and administrative staff activities. Duties directly involve making duty assignments, commanding both suppression and emergency medical activities, coordination of administrative and fire prevention functions” (JTFD job description, 2011).

Captain The entry level officer and fourth highest ranking officer in JTFD. “Company Officer responsible for the direction and supervision during emergency responses in a combination fire/EMS company, all station activities, as well as overseeing all other related work as required or assigned” (JTFD job description, 2011).

Firefighter/Paramedic “Entry level career firefighter that engages directly in firefighting activities to protect lives and safeguard lives and property from fire. He is responsible for the operation of an ambulance and emergency care of patients. Assists in repair and maintenance of fire stations and equipment, and does related work as required” (JTFD job description, 2011).

Staff Personnel Career personnel who work a 40-hour week and are not on a 24-hour shift.

Field Personnel Career personnel who work a 24-hour shift. Part time firefighters work parts of a 24-hour shift and are considered to be field personnel. Also known as operations or shift personnel.

Survey Monkey A web survey development cloud based company, founded in 1999 by Ryan Finley. It is a survey software tool for professional research.

Limitations of the Study

There are limitations to the surveys. The external surveys were sent to township or fire district departments that served mostly above 20,000 in population. There could be good and useful information from other departments that were not surveyed. A similar type department serving less than 20,000 people was not surveyed. Likewise, a similar size department was not

surveyed if it followed civil service rules. Not all of the departments that were surveyed completed the survey.

It is difficult to survey a large number of departments that are similar in size and type. Being a large township population, there are few departments in Ohio that qualify as being similar. This is the reason that the survey base was broadened to 20,000 and above for population served.

The internal survey was sent to all career personnel. There may be good and useful information that was not surveyed. No part time personnel received the survey. As with the external survey, not all internal members surveyed completed the survey.

RESULTS

The internal survey was sent to all career personnel within the JTFD. This was sent to 68 employees. Forty responses were recorded, demonstrating a 59% return rate. The first two questions were targeted for fire administration personnel only. Those that were not in fire administration were directed to skip to question three. When asked if the township trustees and administrator feel our current promotional procedures are adequate and effective, one respondent strongly agreed, two sometimes agreed, two were neutral and one strongly disagreed. This survey question looked to see how fire administration felt the trustees and administrator viewed the current promotional procedures. It can be used as a gauge to see how difficult a change at that level would be if recommended.

When asked how JTFD administration felt that our current promotional procedures are adequate and effective, one respondent strongly agreed, three sometimes agreed, one was neutral, one sometimes disagreed and one strongly disagreed. The problem with the first two survey questions is that only two of the seven total respondents noted that they were from the command staff within the fire department. It is suggested that some respondents did not read the directions clearly and merely completed the entire survey. Of the two that were indicative of command staff, the results were as follows: The first responded to sometimes agreeing and the second was neutral that the trustees and administrator feel that the current procedures are adequate and effective. The first respondent stated that they were neutral and the second sometimes agreed that the fire administration felt that the current procedures were adequate and effective.

Department members were asked if they feel the current promotional procedures are adequate and effective. Five percent strongly agreed, 26% sometimes agreed, 16% were neutral,

32% sometimes disagreed and 21% strongly disagreed. This results in 52% of the respondents feeling negatively toward the adequacy and effectiveness of the current promotional procedure.

Of the 39 respondents, 51% strongly agreed that they favored a promotional process where testing components are formally weighted. Thirty three percent sometimes agreed, 8% were neutral, one person (3%) sometimes disagreed and two strongly disagreed (5%.) This is an 85% rate of positive feelings toward formal weighting of testing components.

Members were asked if they would favor a promotional process where management has a rule of three. This narrows the selection process to one of the top three finalists for each promoted position. Twenty six percent each strongly and sometimes agreed, showing a 52% favorable rating. Fifteen percent were neutral, 21% sometimes disagreed and 13% strongly disagreed with the rule of three.

When asked if members would favor a process where management must promote the top ranked candidate, only 5% strongly agreed while 18% sometimes agreed. Ten percent replied neutral, 30% sometimes disagreed and 38% strongly disagreed that the top candidate should be promoted. This is a 68% disapproval rating that the top candidate must be promoted.

Members were then asked if they favor a promotional process where there is more than just a written test and an interview. Forty-five percent strongly agreed, 43% sometimes agreed, one respondent was neutral while two persons each sometimes disagreed (5%) and strongly disagreed (5%.) This is an 88% approval of having a process that consists of having more than just a written test and an interview.

The last internal process question asked if they would favor a promotional process where the test scoring results are measured and used to formulate a binding ranking that would be used to fill vacancies as they occur. Fifteen percent strongly agreed, 44% sometimes agreed, 18% replied as neutral, 5% sometimes disagreed and 18% strongly disagreed with the results used as a binding ranking. This is a 59% approval rating of the binding ranking for filling vacancies.

The internal respondents were surveyed as to their career years of service. Eight percent served from zero to five years, eight percent served from six to ten years. Thirty percent served from 11-15 years and 25% served from 16-20 years. Thirty percent of the respondents have served over 20 years on the JTFD.

Respondents were represented by the following ranks: 49% were Firefighters, 31% were Captains, 8% were Battalion Chiefs and 5% were from command staff. The remaining 8% were from other positions including administration and Fire Prevention Bureau. Eighty percent of the respondents were either Firefighter or Captain ranks that make up the majority of the promotional process participants.

The external survey was sent to 35 fire departments in Ohio that were like size and type to JTFD. This included departments that were primarily a population of 20,000 and above, and that were Township governed. There were 22-recorded responses, demonstrating a 63% return rate. Of the 22 responding fire departments, 21 or 95% had a promotional process that was based on competitive testing. Ninety-one percent of the departments replied that the weight of each testing category was stated prior to testing.

Departments were asked at what rank they promote officers by competitive testing. One hundred percent stated company officer, and 41% stated Battalion or District Chief was

promoted by competitive testing. Twenty-three percent of departments stated Deputy or Assistant Chief, and 14% stated that the Chief of Department was tested competitively. Conversely, no departments responded to promotion by appointment for the Captain rank. Fourteen percent responded to Battalion or District Chief promotion by appointment, as well as 45% for Deputy or Assistant Chief and 73% for Chief of Department.

When asked how departments promote after the final testing results, 36% responded to promoting in the order of rank number. Thirty-six percent responded to using the rule of three in promotions, and 18% used the results as information only. Two respondents replied as other responses. One of the two commented that they use the top five candidates. The second “other” response stated that they are not bound by a ranking order, but best practice and moral issues arise by not following the ranked order. This responder went on to say, “If you were not going to follow the ranked order, testing would be meaningless.”

The question was then asked what test mechanisms were used for promotions. Ninety-five percent stated they used a written test, 82% used an assessment center and 95% used an oral interview. Chief evaluations and performance evaluations were each used by seven respondents (32%.) Five respondents responded to other mechanisms, including an oral test, trustee interview being 30% of the test, years of service and ½ point earned for every year over five years employed. One “other” respondent commented that they have two oral interviews: one with general staff including union and police participation, and the second with the command staff.

Departments were asked what the weight was for each testing procedure. The average written test weight was 34%, average assessment center weight was 33% while the average oral interview weight was 28%. If used, the Chief evaluation average weight was 13% and the

average performance evaluation weight was 15%. (See Appendix 4 for specific response procedural weights.)

Of the 22 departments that responded to the survey, 36% of them strongly agreed that they believe their local government administration feels that their current promotional testing procedures are adequate and effective. Forty-one percent sometimes agreed, while 18% remained neutral. Only one respondent (5%) strongly disagreed that their current procedures are adequate and effective. Seventy-seven percent felt favorable that their government administration feels their current procedures are adequate and effective.

Department members surveyed were asked if their fire department administration feels the promotional procedures are adequate and effective. Forty-one percent strongly agreed, and 45% sometimes agreed that their process was adequate and effective. Only three respondents (14%) sometimes disagreed that their process was adequate and effective. This is an 86% response regarding a positive feeling toward their promotional process.

Departments surveyed were asked to complete the following question if they participated in the last promotional process. Eleven of the 22 departments surveyed responded. Of those that responded, 45% strongly agreed and 45% sometimes agreed that their most recent promotional process was adequate and effective. One respondent (10%) strongly disagreed that their most recent process was adequate and effective.

Two departments (9%) that completed the external survey serve a population under 25,000. Sixteen departments (73%) of the surveyed departments serve a population between 25,001 and 50,000. Four departments responding (18%) serve a population between 50,001 and 75,000. Ninety five percent of the departments surveyed operate in a township form of government, while one respondent operated in a fire district.

The external survey concluded by asking respondents to elaborate on any of the questions, if needed. Three respondents submitted additional comments. One stated, “Unfortunately, we are tied by the current collective bargaining agreement (CBA) to take the number one candidate on the list. I believe management should be able to select the individual from the top three candidates.” A second commented “We also get ½ point for each year of service after six years for the position of Lieutenant and Captain.” The third respondent stated that the “promotional process is included in the Union contract.”

Research question #1 asks: “What are the current practices in other Ohio township promotional processes?” The current practices of other Ohio township promotional practices are reflected in the external survey results found in Appendix 4. It has been demonstrated via the survey that a competitive and standard promotional process is favored. In examining the results from questions 8 – 10 that a standard promotional process is viewed as adequate and effective from township administration, as well as from fire department personnel.

Research question #2 asks: “How are other similar type and size departments doing promotional processes?” The components of similar type and size department promotional processes are also reflected in the external survey results found in Appendix 4. Similar departments offer a competitive test for most promoted positions. The weight of each category is stated prior to the testing process. After the testing mechanisms are scored, the townships promote by “rule of three,” where the top three overall scoring candidates are eligible for promotion. The common test mechanisms are a written test, an assessment center and an interview component. These mechanisms are similarly weighted toward the final score.

Research question #4 asks: “Is a standardized promotional process favorable to JTFD?” The views of a standardized promotional process in JTFD are noted in the survey results found in

Appendix 3. The current promotional process is not viewed as favorable. The JTFD members favor a promotional process where there is more than just a written exam, and that the testing components are weighted and listed prior to the testing process. The JTFD members do not wish to mandatorily promote the top-scoring candidate, but favor a “rule of three system.” Compared to the current promotional process, the surveyed JTFD members do think that a standardized promotional process is favorable.

DISCUSSION

The literature review, external survey and internal survey were completed and examined thoroughly. This information was compared and evaluated to reveal the many aspects of the promotional process. It was then compared to the research questions for this project.

It was very interesting to find that the majority of the literature review information directly correlated with the external survey results. It seems that as if the vast majority of departments in the external survey were directly in line with the literature review findings. On the other hand, the internal survey results were not as straightforward. The internal survey results showed that a small number of respondents, at times, seemed to be comfortable with the status quo in terms of a change in the promotional process. This could be a belief that the current promotional process is viewed as adequate and efficient, or there is a fear of the unknown. There is also the thought that poor scoring candidates, or candidates that choose not to properly prepare for the promotional process still have an equal chance for success under the current process. That being said, the majority of the internal survey respondents was in favor of a more defined promotional process and indicated a change was needed.

Jackson Township is a township government that falls under the ruling of Ohio Revised Code Section 505.38 (2007) that states it can provide the employment of firefighters as it sees fit. The Jackson Township Hiring Policy (2001) states they have the sole authority to make personnel decisions within the Township. Although there are no laws being infringed in the current promotional practices, best industry practices show a different promotional path.

The promotional process starts with the preparation of the job opening. The process should stick to the qualifications of the candidate. It should strive to reduce or eliminate emotions or personal considerations that could influence administrative decisions (Shafritz,

Russell & Borick, 2012). The testing components should include more than just a written exam. There is little connection between the traditional multiple-choice questions and the real life situations that may be found on the fireground, in the field, or in the firehouse (Murtaugh, 1994). The more components that are used in the promotional process, the better the reliability of the testing process. This is better apt to show the true strengths and weaknesses of the candidate. The internal survey shows that 45% strongly agree and 43% sometimes agree that the JTFD should have a promotional process that consists of more than just a written exam and an interview. A best practice mix of testing components includes a written exam, an assessment center and an oral interview. The external survey showed that 96% of the departments use a written exam, 82% use an assessment center and 96% use an oral interview.

Promotional candidates should know the weight of the test mechanisms prior to commencement of the promotional process. The external survey showed that 91% of the departments showed the weight of each testing category prior to administering the test. The internal survey showed that 51% of JTFD members strongly agree and 33% sometimes agree that the testing components should be formally weighted.

The testing mechanisms should be standardized with documented results (Loftus, 2007). This not only validates the tests for promotion, but also offers the candidate awareness of his strengths and weaknesses. In addition to documentation for the promotional process, the candidate then has the opportunity to work on his strengths and weaknesses to be better prepared when the next promotions are announced. This not only benefits the candidate, but also the fire department.

The testing results should be compiled with the weighted categories in mind to produce a final candidate ranking. The external survey showed that of the three most popular testing

mechanisms, they are roughly weighted in thirds. The external survey averaged the weights as follows: the written exam is worth 34%, the assessment center is worth 33% and the interview weighted as 28%. The sum of these test averages is 95%. They could be adjusted to equal 100% or add another dimension to the final score. An example of an additional scoring dimension would be the Fire Chief's evaluation. If implemented, it could also include the candidate's performance evaluation. Fifty-nine percent of the internal survey respondents strongly agree or sometimes agree that the results should formulate a binding ranking. Seventy three percent of the external surveyed departments use the final tabulations in order of rank or a rule of three for promotional consideration. One respondent on the external survey stated that best practices and morale issues arise by not following the ranked order. He added, "If you were not going to follow the ranked order, then the testing would be meaningless" (Appendix 4).

The jurisdiction should have the latitude of promoting from a group of the top ranked candidates under a rule of three or similar provision (Angione, 2000). The internal survey showed that 51% of JTFD members strongly agree or sometimes agree that a rule of three is favorable. Thirty three percent of JTFD members sometimes disagree or strongly disagree that a rule of three is favorable. Sixty eight percent of JTFD members sometimes disagree or strongly disagree that the top candidate must be promoted.

Presently, the only promotion in JTFD that is competitively tested is the Captain rank. All other promoted ranks are by appointment. The external survey showed that 100% of Captain promotions are promoted by competitive testing. It also showed that 41% of Battalion/District Chief promotions are by competitive testing. As the promoted rank escalates, the rate of competitive testing is reduced. The Deputy/Assistant Chief promotions are 23% and the Chief of Department rank is 14% competitively tested.

The external survey then examined the rate at which the promoted ranks are by appointment, as opposed to competitive testing. There was no departments surveyed that promoted the Captain rank by appointment. Fourteen departments listed the Battalion/District Chief rank as appointed. As expected, and consistent with the competitive testing data, the higher-ranking promotions are higher in appointment percentages. The Deputy/Assistant Chief promotion was appointed 45% by surveyed departments, and the Chief of Department was appointed in 73% of departments.

In exploring like size and type departments, the external survey respondents were evaluated regarding their feelings of how their government administration and fire administration viewed the adequacy and efficiency of their current promotional process. The majority surveyed believed their government administration is pleased with their processes adequacy and efficiency. They went on to report that their fire department administration is pleased with their processes adequacy and efficiency. This information validates that departments that are currently using the industry best practices for their promotional process are working well and are well accepted.

RECOMMENDATIONS

After reviewing the literature, internal and external surveys it is recommended that the current promotional process at JTFD does not follow best industry practices. It can, however, be improved with some changes. There are many facets that are to be taken into consideration. They include, but are not limited to, employee morale, validation of testing mechanisms, measurable results, weighted values of tests, variety of testing types, standardization, reduction of subjectivity and the use of the final candidate rankings. It is further suggested that more research be done on standardized promotional practices.

The recommendation is that a Promotional Board be established to assist the Fire Chief in the development of a standardized promotional process. This should include at least one JTFD career member from each rank that is educated in the subject of promotions. It is not feasible to change all of the ranks of the promotional process at once. It is suggested that the Captain promotional process be implemented first, since it would be the biggest influence to the most promoted positions in the department. The Promotional Board should meet to develop a standardized promotional process that meets best industry practices. This includes the posting of the promoted position and comprising of the testing mechanisms of written exam, assessment center and oral interview. It also includes an element of the Chief grade officer evaluation. The past practice of eligibility regarding being a career firefighter for five years should continue. This particular figure was not surveyed but is common and well accepted by JTFD members. The weights of each category need to be clearly stated on the job posting. These weights can be discussed by the Promotional Board, but a suggested weight breakdown can be: written exam – 30%; assessment center -35%; oral interview – 30% and Chief grade officer evaluation – 5%.

These weight breakdowns are averaged from the survey results in Appendix 4. All testing mechanisms should be done with a standardized scoring sheet to produce measurable results. In addition, all testing mechanism should be conducted by a fair and impartial testing procedure. The past practice of using the Ohio Fire Chiefs' has been well received, and has been proven to be clear, concise and impartial. After the written test is scored, retain the current practice of the top 12 passing (above 70%) raw scores to be considered for advancement. For those top 12 candidates, it is recommended to maintain that at this time any current extra credit points be added for the final written score. Those top 12 scoring candidates should maintain the current use of Officers in Charge (OIC) to be used as acting Captain's. Current extra credit amounts are .32 points for each completed year of seniority. It is recommended that maxing the seniority points at 20 years with the understanding that the candidate should acquire the necessary field experience by the 20-year mark. Currently extra credit up to 5 points (with partial credit for quarters or semesters toward completion) is offered for an Associate Degree. It is recommended that changing from the quarterly or semester credit to the full extra credit on the Associate Degree for degree completion. This would be 3 points. In addition to an Associate Degree in Fire Science, it is recommended that additional extra credit be given for a Bachelor's Degree in Fire Science or Management (or equivalent,) Master's Degree in Business or Emergency Services (or equivalent,) Ohio Fire Executive (OFE) or Executive Fire Officer (EFO) certifications. It is recommended to adding 5 points for a completed Bachelor's Degree in Management or Fire Science (or equivalent.) Adding 5 points each for a completed Master's Degree in Business or Emergency Services (or equivalent,) OFE and EFO certificates. The above-mentioned extra credit points would be added to the written passing score of the candidate.

The top 12 raw written exam-scoring candidates should then, if a promotion is imminent, advance to the assessment center, oral interviews and the Chief grade officer evaluation. All testing mechanisms should be done with a standardized scoring sheet to produce measurable results. These scoring sheets, comments, as well as the final score, should be made available to each corresponding candidate. At the conclusion of such testing components, the final scores and ranking of the top 12 Captain candidates should be made public and posted internally. This would remove the secrecy of the current process and improve employee morale and process validity.

It is then recommended that the Promotional Board and Fire Chief establish a “rule of three.” This means that for each promoted position, the organization can choose the candidate that best fits the JTFD from the top three ranking candidates. It also indicates that in the event of more than one position is available, that after the first candidate is chosen, the fourth ranked candidate moves up into the next round of the top three. If further positions exist, the next ranked candidate in line moves up to be considered in the “rule of three.” It does not mean, for example, that if three positions need filled that the department can choose from the top nine.

This ranked list should remain to be established for the life of the testing list. The past practice of two years is favorable, and should remain in place. Any subsequent promotions during the current list should pick up where it left off in the previous promotion.

After the reorganized standardized Captain promotional process is complete, the Promotional Board and Fire Chief should meet to analyze how the new system succeeded. Any changes or alterations to the standardized promotional process should be addressed.

When the standardized Captain promotional practices are refined, then the Promotional Board and the Fire Chief can implement a standardized promotional practice for the rank of

Battalion Chief. By using the lessons learned and experience of the standardized Captain promotional process, development of a standardized Battalion Chief promotional process should be a much easier implementation. It is recommended that an eligibility requirement include holding the rank of Captain for five years be implemented. The testing mechanisms should be similar, but admittedly the content will be different between the Captain and Battalion Chief promotions. In the Battalion Chief promotional process, the top six passing written raw score candidates will be used as Battalion OICs. This is due to the current usage of six Battalion OICs, two for each of the three shifts. The top six raw scoring written exams should have extra credit points applied to the written score, and if a promotion is imminent, proceed to the assessment center, oral interview and Chief grade officer evaluation. The extra credit points will be the same as the Captain promotion extra credit points. The proposed weights of the written test, the assessment center, oral interview and Chief grade officer evaluation for Captain can be used for the Battalion Chief promotional process. The “rule of three” should apply to the Battalion Chief promotional process with the aforementioned guidelines in place.

After the reorganized standardized Battalion Chief promotional process is complete, the Promotional Board and Fire Chief should meet to analyze how the new revised system succeeded. Any changes or alterations to the standardized promotional process should be addressed.

It is recognized that not all departments promote the Deputy Fire Chief and Fire Chief rank by a competitive test. It should be discussed with the Promotional Board and Fire Chief if or how a standardized promotional process is implemented for Deputy Fire Chief and Fire Chief. There may be an opportunity to do some standardized testing, while giving the organization

more flexibility to appoint these positions. This includes standardized testing and possibly changing the test mechanism percentages if desired.

It is understood by the JTFD administration and the Township Trustees that a change in the current promotional process is needed. It is the purpose of this research paper to act as a stimulant for conversation on the history, literature review, internal and external surveys, results, discussion and recommendations on a standardized promotional process.

Since Jackson Township is a very community minded government, the use of a Promotional Board would be well accepted to review and make recommendations on the fairness of the promotional process. By including a reputable member from each rank of JTFD, it will show involvement from all levels within the organization. This collaboration fits into the Jackson Township business model.

It is understood that, by law, the township trustees have the final say in the promotional process. It is the recommendation of this author that the Promotional Board operate in the absence of the township trustees to form the “rule of three” candidates. After the three eligible candidates are selected for each position, the Fire Chief will meet with the trustees to recommend and select the candidate to promote.

The past practice of using the Ohio Fire Chief’s to administer the testing procedure should continue. The ultimate goal of the promotional process is to create a fair and impartial evaluation of the candidates. The current costs are approximately \$2,000 for the written exam. The additional cost included in this recommendation is approximately \$13,000 for the assessment center and oral interview. The past practice of administering a written exam every two years would remain in place to establish an eligibility list. The assessment center and oral interview would be enacted in the event of a pending job opening.

By implementing the mentioned recommendations, JTFD can have a reputable standardized promotional process that can be a model for Ohio townships. The end result is to have a fair, measureable and competitive testing process that is open and honest. This includes a process that promotes an employee's career path of successful development toward an officer position with a standardized goal. This standardized promotional process will follow industry best practices and be a valuable, unbiased selection tool for the fire officers that will lead JTFD into the future.

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APPENDIX 1 – INTERNAL SURVEY QUESTIONS**OFE Internal Survey for Promotional Processes**

Questions one and two are for fire administration personnel only. If you are not in fire administration, please skip to question three.

1. “Our township trustees and administrator feel our current promotional procedures are adequate and effective.”

- Strongly agree
- Sometimes agree
- Neutral, they do not agree or disagree
- Sometimes disagree
- Strongly disagree

2. “Our fire department administration feels our current promotional procedures are adequate and effective.”

- Strongly agree
- Sometimes agree
- Neutral, they do not agree or disagree
- Sometimes disagree
- Strongly disagree

3. “As a member, I feel our current promotional procedures are adequate and effective.”

- Strongly agree
- Sometimes agree
- Neutral, I do not agree or disagree
- Sometimes disagree
- Strongly disagree

4. “I would favor a promotional process where testing components are formally weighted.”
(Ex. Written test is 50%, Skill stations are 30%, Oral interview is 20%, or other weight configurations)

- Strongly agree
- Sometimes agree
- Neutral, I do not agree or disagree
- Sometimes disagree
- Strongly disagree

5. “I would favor a promotional process where management has a rule of three.” (The top three ranked candidates are eligible for a promoted position)

- Strongly agree
- Sometimes agree
- Neutral, I do not agree or disagree
- Sometimes disagree

Strongly disagree

6. "I would favor a promotional process where management must promote the top ranked candidate."

Strongly agree

Sometimes agree

Neutral, I do not agree or disagree

Sometimes disagree

Strongly disagree

7. "I would favor a promotional process where there is more than just a written exam and an interview." (Ex. Scenario based evaluations)

Strongly agree

Sometimes agree

Neutral, I do not agree or disagree

Sometimes disagree

Strongly disagree

8. "I would favor a promotional process where the test scoring results are measured and used to formulate a binding ranking that would be used to fill vacancies as they occur."

- Strongly agree
- Sometimes agree
- Neutral, I do not agree or disagree
- Sometimes disagree
- Strongly disagree

9. I have been a career member for:

- 0 – 5 years 6 – 10 years 11 – 15 years 16 – 20 years
- Greater than 20 years

10. Your current rank is:

- Firefighter Captain Battalion Chief Command staff Other

APPENDIX 2 – EXTERNAL SURVEY QUESTIONS**OFE External Survey for Promotional Processes**

1. Is your fire department's promotional process based on competitive testing?

 Yes

 No (skip to question #4)

2. Is the weight of each category stated prior to testing? (Ex. Written test is 50%, Skill stations are 30%, Oral interview is 20%, or other weight configurations)

 Yes

 No

3. What rank does your fire department promote officers by competitive testing? (Please check all that apply)

 Company officer (Lieutenant and/or Captain)

 Battalion/District Chief

 Deputy/Assistant Chief

 Chief of Department

 Other (Please explain)

 N/A

4. What rank does your fire department promote officers by appointment rather than competitive testing? (Please check all that apply)

 Company officer (Lieutenant and/or Captain)

 Battalion/District Chief

Deputy/Assistant Chief

Chief of Department

Other (Please explain)

N/A

5. How do you promote officers based on final test results?

In order of rank number

Rule of three (The top three candidates are eligible for a promoted position)

Used as information only, we are not bound by candidate rankings.

Other (Please explain)

6. What procedure(s) do you use for your promotions? (Please check all that apply)

Written test

Assessment center

Oral interview

Chief evaluation

Performance evaluation

Other (Please explain)

7. What is the weight (If applicable) for each testing procedure?

Written test %

Assessment Center %

Oral interview %

Chief evaluation %

Performance evaluation %

Other (Please Explain) %

For questions 8 –10, pick the answer that you believe to be the most correct.

8. “Our local government hierarchy feels that the current promotional testing procedures are adequate and effective.”

- Strongly agree
- Sometimes agree
- Neutral, they do not agree or disagree
- Sometimes disagree
- Strongly disagree

9. "Our fire department administration feels that the promotional procedures are adequate and effective."

- Strongly agree
- Sometimes agree
- Neutral, they do not agree or disagree
- Sometimes disagree
- Strongly disagree

10. "Those department members that participated in the most recent promotional process felt that it was adequate and effective."

- Strongly agree
- Sometimes agree
- Neutral, I do not agree or disagree
- Sometimes disagree
- Strongly disagree

11. What population does your fire department serve?

- 0-25,000
- 25,001 – 50,000
- 50,001 – 75,000
- 75,001 – 100,000
- Greater than 100,001

12. What type of government or parameters does your fire department promote by?

Charter city

Civil service

Township

Other (Please explain)

13. If necessary, please use the comment box below to further describe or elaborate on any of the questions.

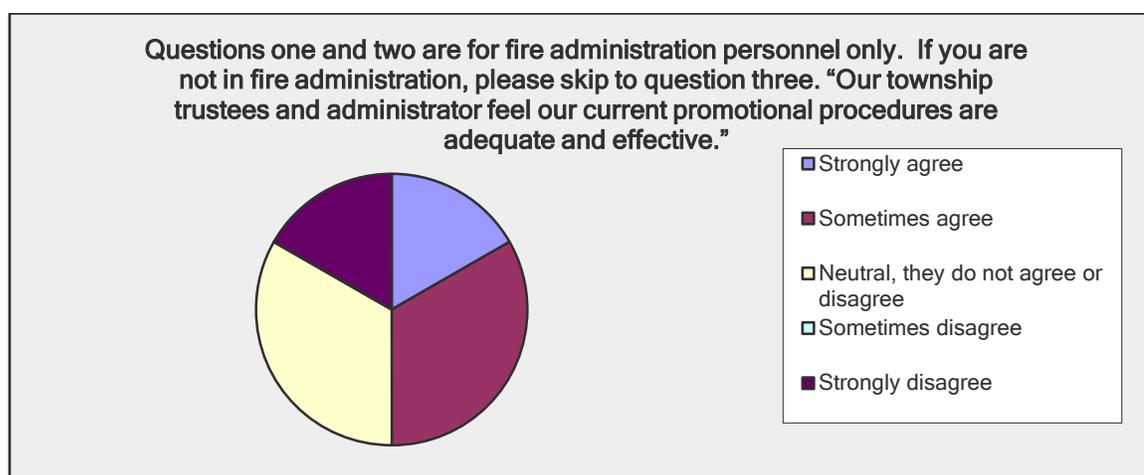


APPENDIX 3 – INTERNAL SURVEY RESULTS

Question #1:

Questions one and two are for fire administration personnel only. If you are not in fire administration, please skip to question three. "Our township trustees and administrator feel our current promotional procedures are adequate and effective."

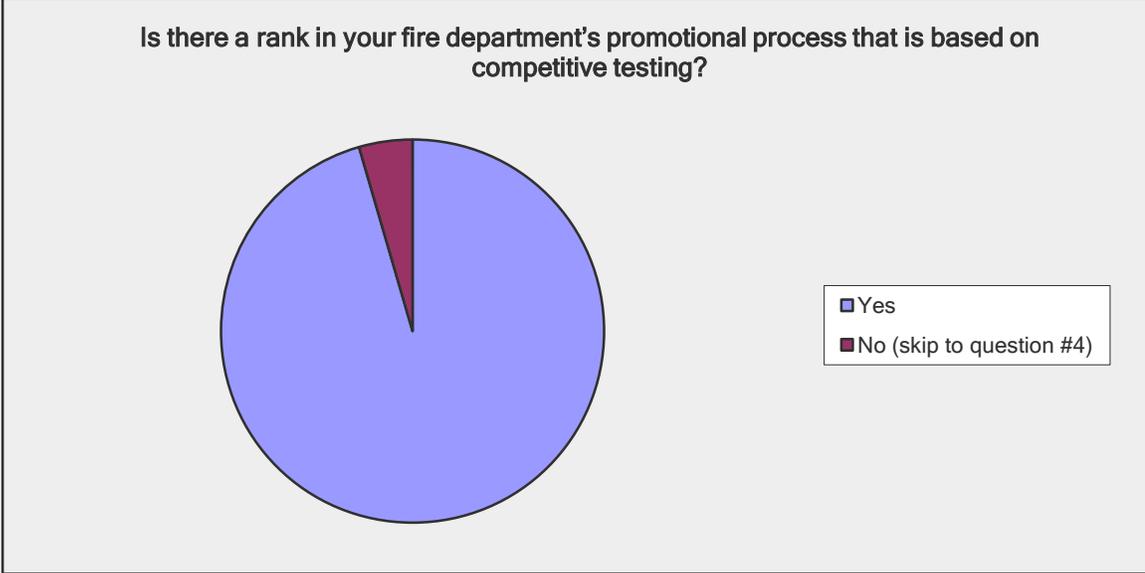
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Strongly agree	16.7%	1
Sometimes agree	33.3%	2
Neutral, they do not agree or disagree	33.3%	2
Sometimes disagree	0.0%	0
Strongly disagree	16.7%	1
<i>answered question</i>		6
<i>skipped question</i>		34



Question #1:

Is there a rank in your fire department's promotional process that is based on competitive testing?

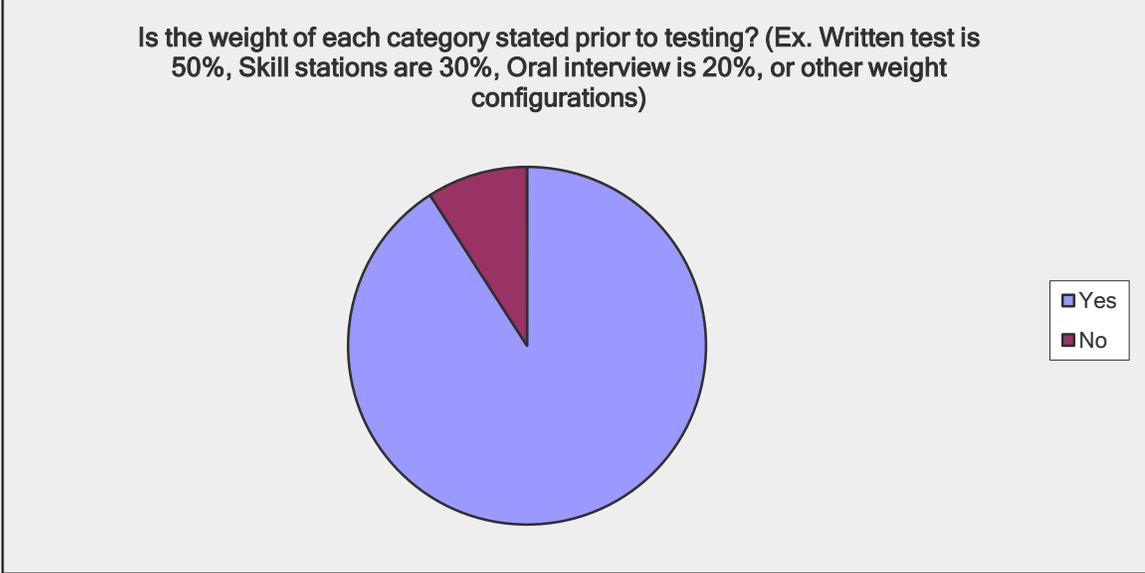
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Yes	95.5%	21
No (skip to question #4)	4.5%	1
<i>answered question</i>		22
<i>skipped question</i>		0



Question #2:

Is the weight of each category stated prior to testing? (Ex. Written test is 50%, Skill stations are 30%, Oral interview is 20%, or other weight configurations)

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Yes	90.9%	20
No	9.1%	2
<i>answered question</i>		22
<i>skipped question</i>		0

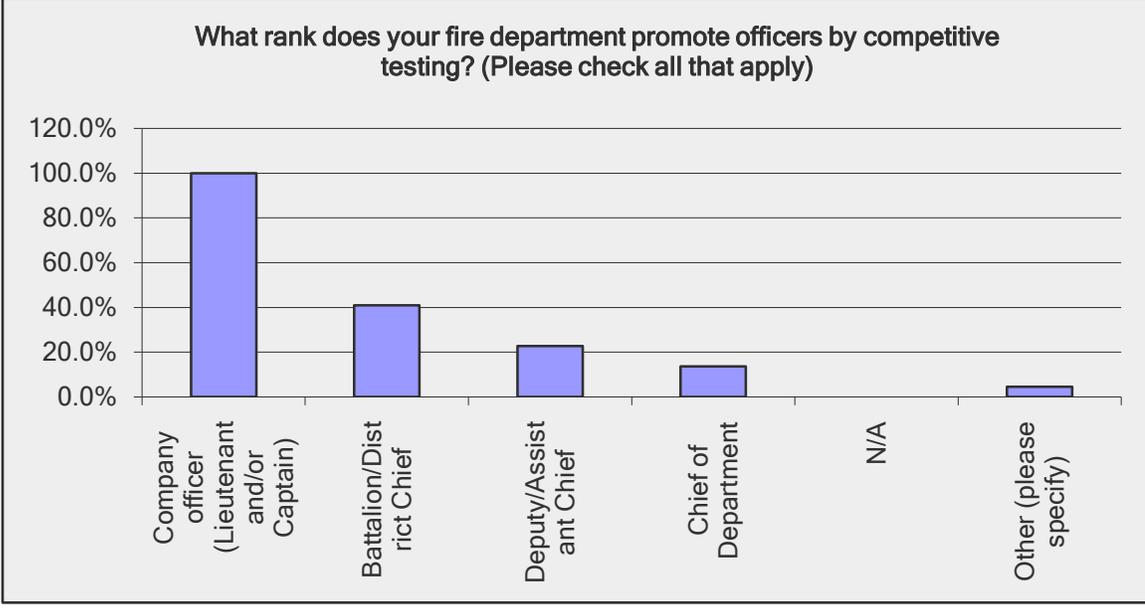


Question #3:

What rank does your fire department promote officers by competitive testing? (Please check all that apply)

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Company officer (Lieutenant and/or Captain)	100.0%	22
Battalion/District Chief	40.9%	9
Deputy/Assistant Chief	22.7%	5
Chief of Department	13.6%	3
N/A	0.0%	0
Other (please specify)	4.5%	1
<i>answered question</i>		22
<i>skipped question</i>		0

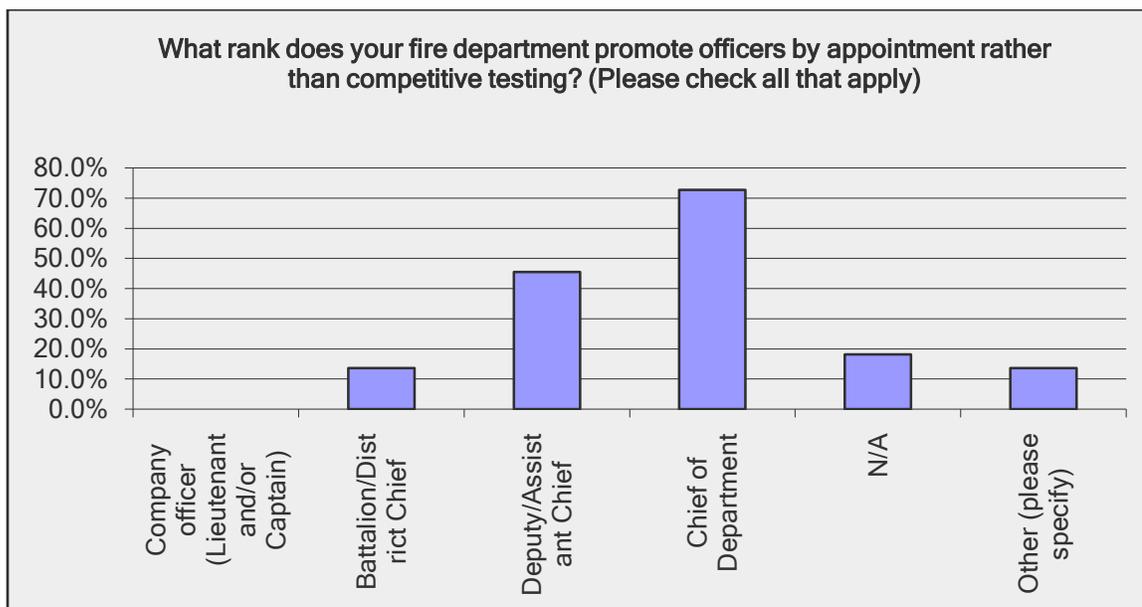
Number	Response Date	Other (please specify)	Categories
1	Feb 7, 2014 3:16 PM	new hires	



Question #4:

What rank does your fire department promote officers by appointment rather than competitive testing? (Please check all that apply)		
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Company officer (Lieutenant and/or Captain)	0.0%	0
Battalion/District Chief	13.6%	3
Deputy/Assistant Chief	45.5%	10
Chief of Department	72.7%	16
N/A	18.2%	4
Other (please specify)	13.6%	3
answered question		22
skipped question		0

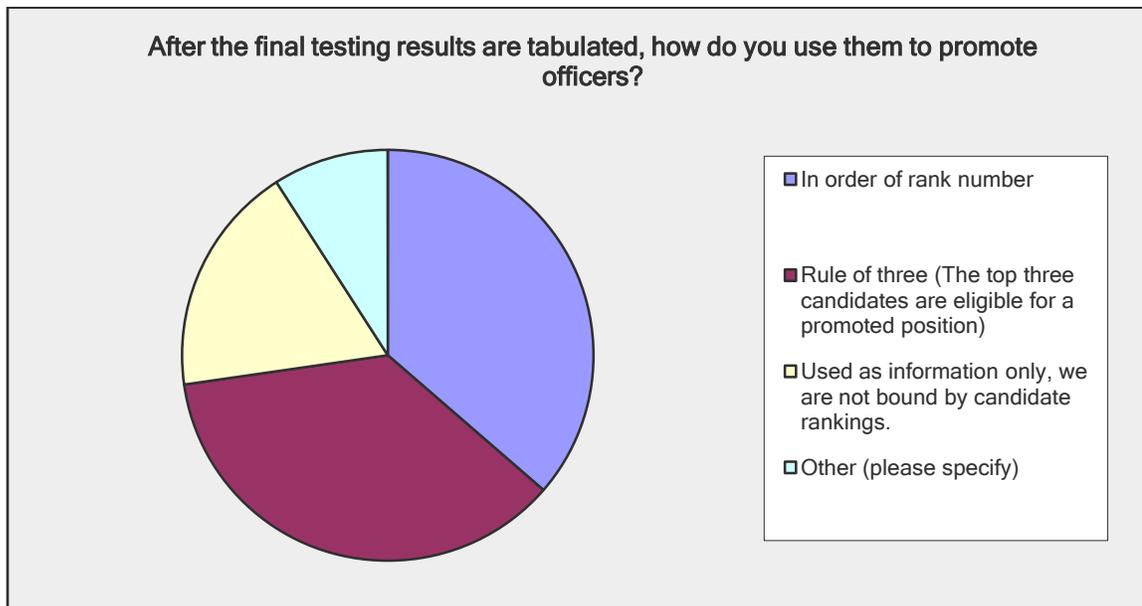
Number	Response Date	Other (please specify)	Categories
1	Feb 10, 2014 9:15 PM	Assistant Chief and Fire Marshal	
2	Feb 8, 2014 1:39 AM	Positions other than LT have been existing for numerous years. Many changes have taken place and will no doubt revise the process for all positions in the future?	
3	Feb 7, 2014 3:36 AM	Chief and Battalion positions are appointed, but there is still a competitive process for candidates	



Question #5:

After the final testing results are tabulated, how do you use them to promote officers?		
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
In order of rank number	36.4%	8
Rule of three (The top three candidates are eligible for a promoted position)	36.4%	8
Used as information only, we are not bound by candidate rankings.	18.2%	4
Other (please specify)	9.1%	2
<i>answered question</i>		22
<i>skipped question</i>		0

Number	Response Date	Other (please specify)
1	Feb 10, 2014 8:30 PM	Top five candidates are interviewed
2	Feb 7, 2014 3:36 AM	We are not bound by a ranking order however, best practice and morale issues arise by not following the ranked order. In addition, if you were not going to follow the ranked order; testing would be meaningless

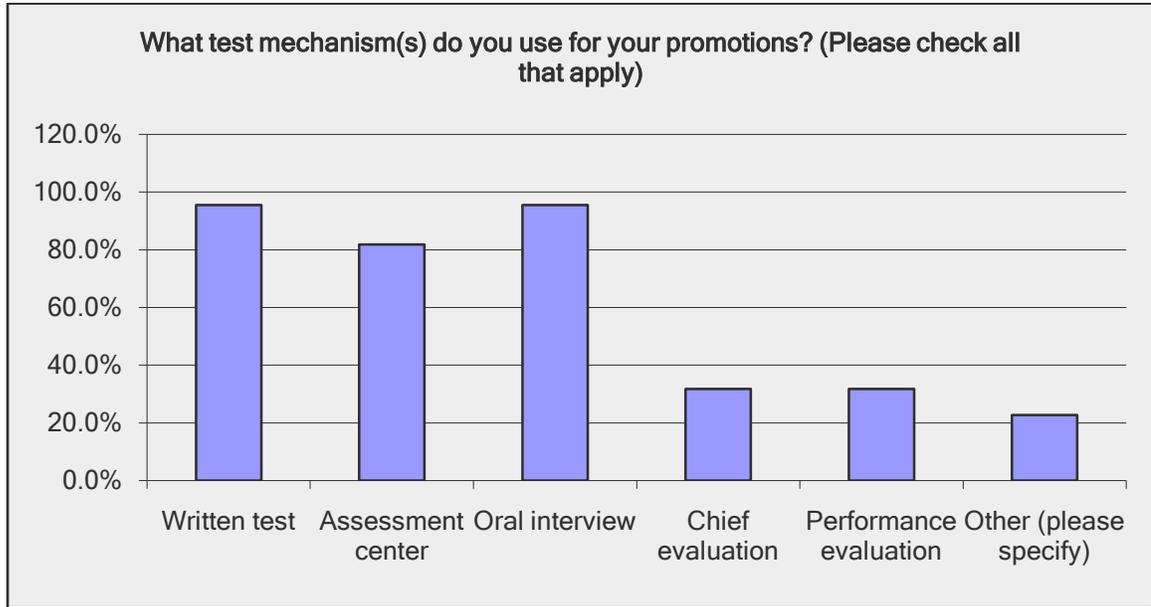


Question #6:

What test mechanism(s) do you use for your promotions? (Please check all that apply)

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Written test	95.5%	21
Assessment center	81.8%	18
Oral interview	95.5%	21
Chief evaluation	31.8%	7
Performance evaluation	31.8%	7
Other (please specify)	22.7%	5
answered question		22
skipped question		0

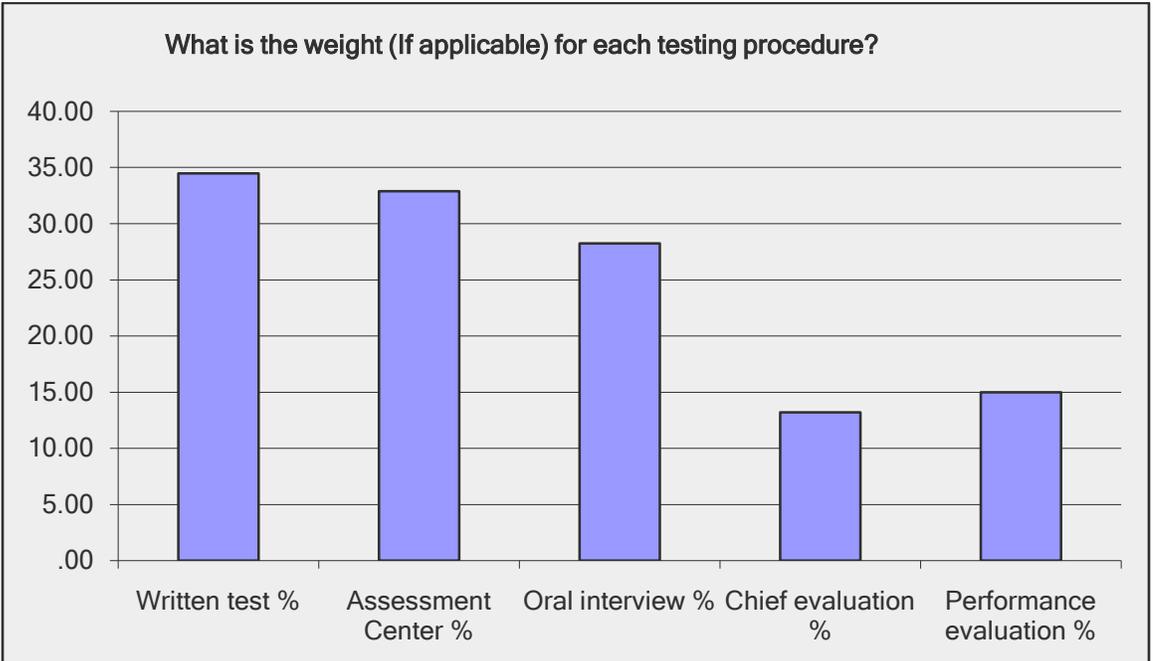
Number	Response Date	Other (please specify)
1	Feb 22, 2014 1:33 AM	Oral test
2	Feb 7, 2014 7:54 PM	Trustee Interview 30% of the testing
3	Feb 7, 2014 4:40 PM	Years of service
4	Feb 7, 2014 4:15 PM	.5 points earned for every year over 5 years employed
5	Feb 7, 2014 3:36 AM	Two oral interviews, one with general staff including union and police participation and the second with the command staff



Question #7:

What is the weight (If applicable) for each testing procedure?			
Answer Options	Response Average	Response Total	Response Count
Written test %	34.47	586	17
Assessment Center %	32.88	526	16
Oral interview %	28.25	452	16
Chief evaluation %	13.20	66	5
Performance evaluation %	15.00	30	2
<i>answered question</i>			17
<i>skipped question</i>			5

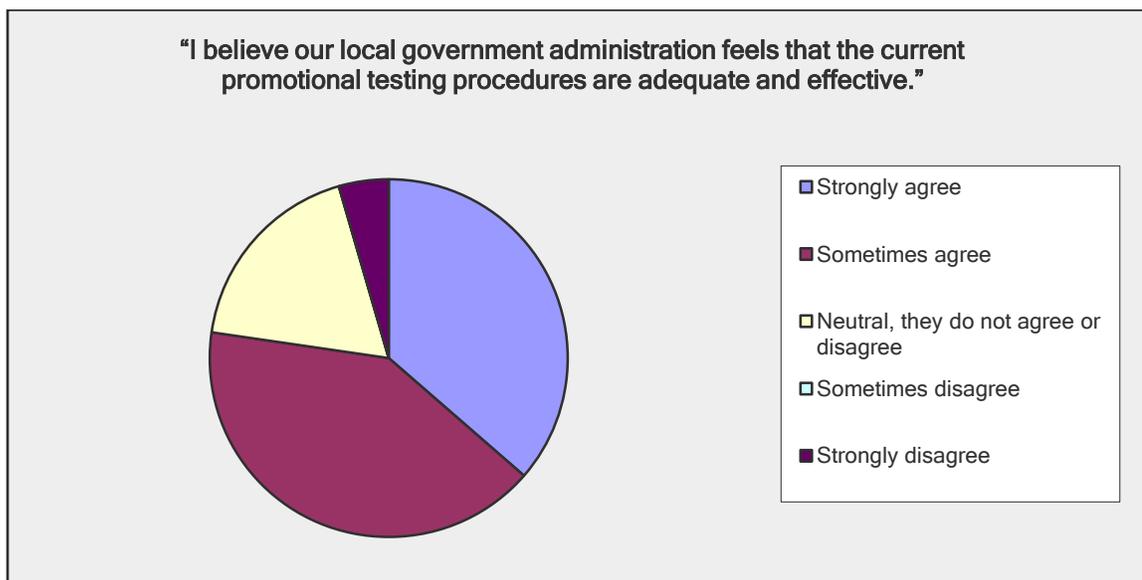
Number	Response Date	Written test %	Assessment Center %	Oral interview %	Chief evaluation %	Performance evaluation %
1	Feb 24, 2014 2:50 PM	20	20	20	20	20
2	Feb 22, 2014 9:58 PM	25	30	45		
3	Feb 12, 2014 3:51 PM	35	45	20		
4	Feb 10, 2014 8:30 PM	40	30	20	10	
5	Feb 10, 2014 3:30 PM	33	33	34		
6	Feb 10, 2014 2:11 PM	30	40	30		
7	Feb 10, 2014 12:38 PM	30	50	20		
8	Feb 8, 2014 1:39 AM	30	30	30		10
9	Feb 7, 2014 7:54 PM	40		30		
10	Feb 7, 2014 4:40 PM	60	30			
11	Feb 7, 2014 4:33 PM	25	25	50		
12	Feb 7, 2014 4:15 PM	40	30	30		
13	Feb 7, 2014 3:42 PM	30	40	30		
14	Feb 7, 2014 3:16 PM	33	33	33	1	
15	Feb 7, 2014 3:08 PM	40	40	10	10	
16	Feb 7, 2014 3:36 AM	25	25	25	25	
17	Feb 7, 2014 3:15 AM	50	25	25		



Question #8:

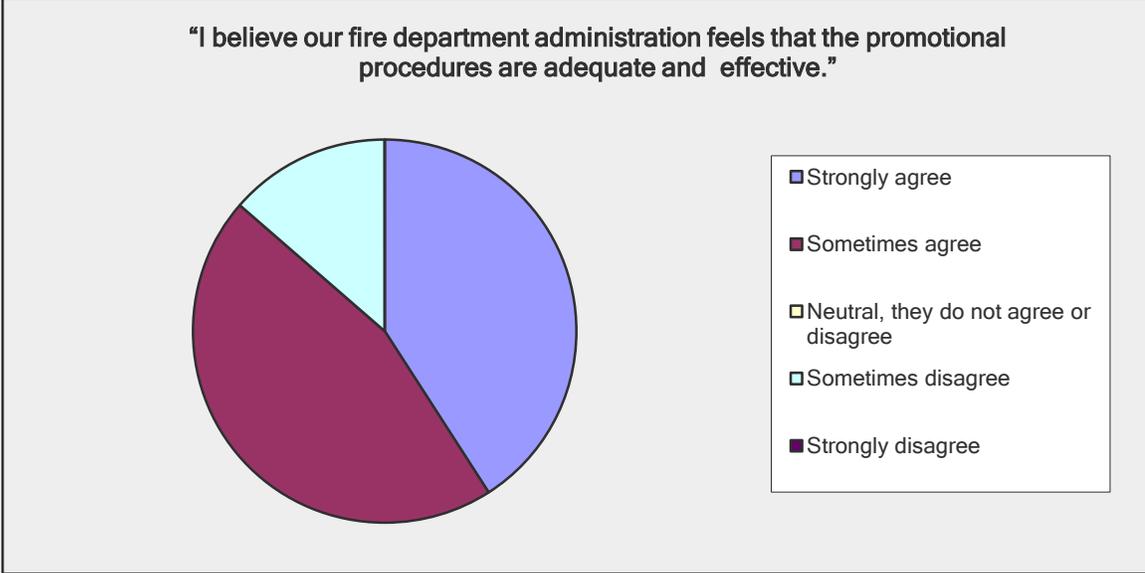
"I believe our local government administration feels that the current promotional testing procedures are adequate and effective."

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Strongly agree	36.4%	8
Sometimes agree	40.9%	9
Neutral, they do not agree or disagree	18.2%	4
Sometimes disagree	0.0%	0
Strongly disagree	4.5%	1
<i>answered question</i>		22
<i>skipped question</i>		0

Question #9:

"I believe our fire department administration feels that the promotional procedures are adequate and effective."

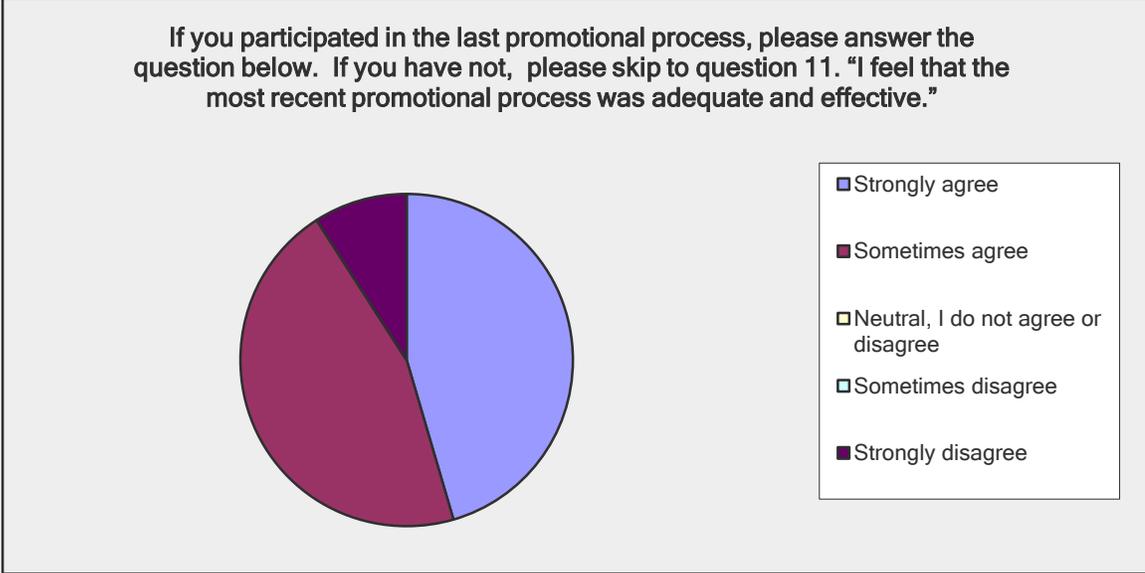
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Strongly agree	40.9%	9
Sometimes agree	45.5%	10
Neutral, they do not agree or disagree	0.0%	0
Sometimes disagree	13.6%	3
Strongly disagree	0.0%	0
<i>answered question</i>		22
<i>skipped question</i>		0



Question #10:

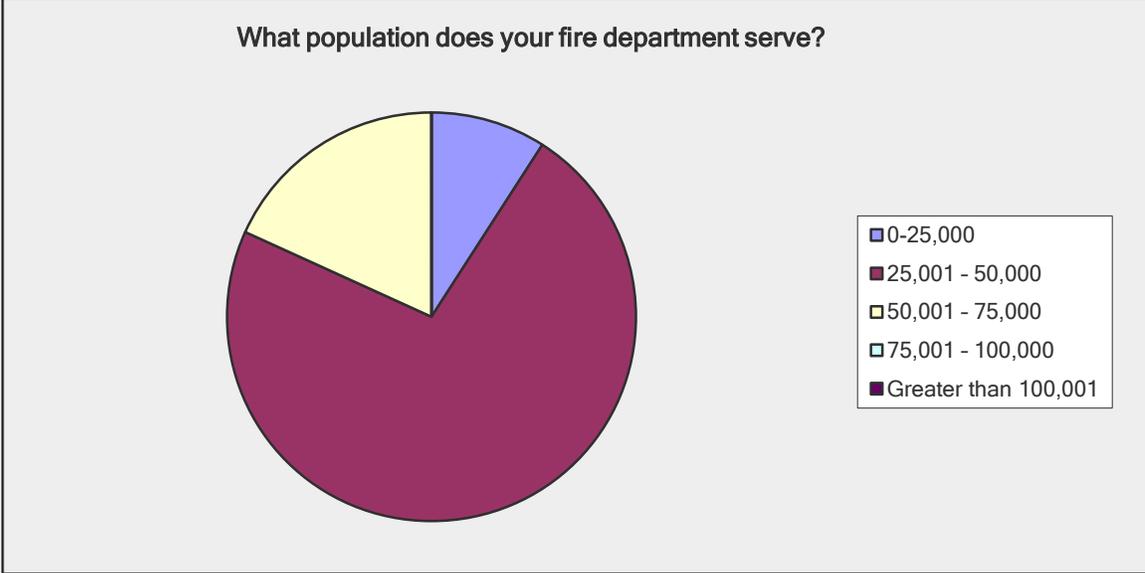
If you participated in the last promotional process, please answer the question below. If you have not, please skip to question 11. "I feel that the most recent promotional process was adequate and effective."

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Strongly agree	45.5%	5
Sometimes agree	45.5%	5
Neutral, I do not agree or disagree	0.0%	0
Sometimes disagree	0.0%	0
Strongly disagree	9.1%	1
<i>answered question</i>		11
<i>skipped question</i>		11



Question #11:

What population does your fire department serve?			
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count	
0-25,000	9.1%	2	
25,001 - 50,000	72.7%	16	
50,001 - 75,000	18.2%	4	
75,001 - 100,000	0.0%	0	
Greater than 100,001	0.0%	0	
<i>answered question</i>			22
<i>skipped question</i>			0



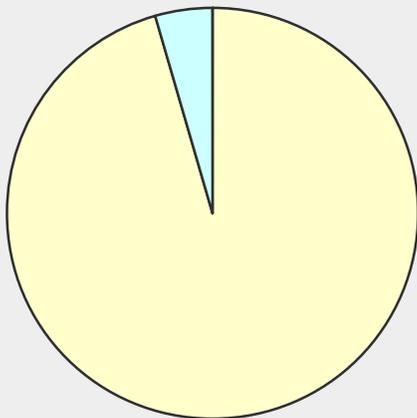
Question #12

What type of government or parameters does your fire department promote by?

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Charter city	0.0%	0
Civil service	0.0%	0
Township	95.5%	21
Other (please specify)	4.5%	1
<i>answered question</i>		22
<i>skipped question</i>		0

Number	Response Date	Other (please specify)	Categories
1	Feb 7, 2014 3:15 AM	Fire District	

What type of government or parameters does your fire department promote by?



- Charter city
- Civil service
- Township
- Other (please specify)

APPENDIX 4 – EXTERNAL SURVEY RESULTS

Question #1

If necessary, please use the comment box below to further describe or elaborate on any of the questions.

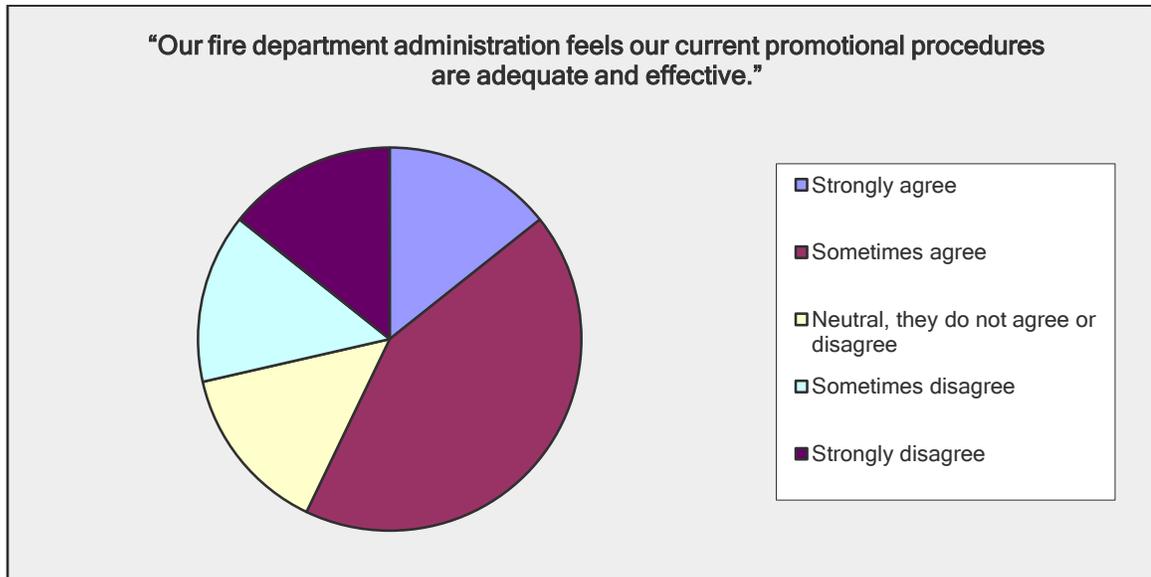
Answer Options	Response Count
	3
<i>answered question</i>	3
<i>skipped question</i>	19

Number	Response Date	Response Text
1	Feb 10, 2014 2:11 PM	Unfortunately, we are tied by the current CBA to take the number one candidate on the list. I believe management should be able to select the individual from the top 3 candidates.
2	Feb 7, 2014 7:54 PM	We also get 1/2 point for each year of service after 6 years for the position of Lieutenant and Captain
3	Feb 7, 2014 4:40 PM	Promotional process is included in the Union contract.

Question #2:

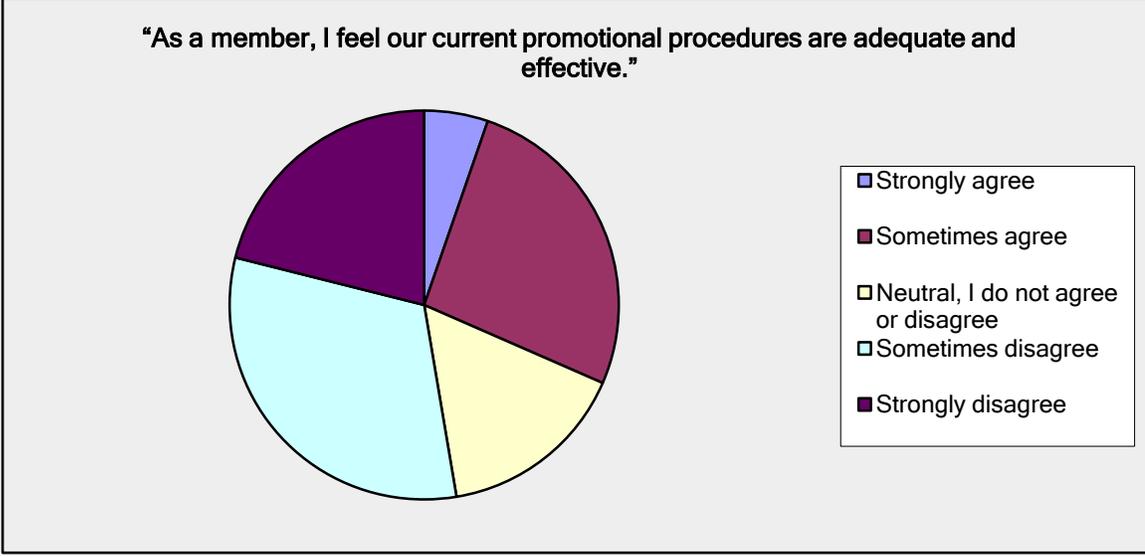
“Our fire department administration feels our current promotional procedures are adequate and effective.”

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Strongly agree	14.3%	1
Sometimes agree	42.9%	3
Neutral, they do not agree or disagree	14.3%	1
Sometimes disagree	14.3%	1
Strongly disagree	14.3%	1
	<i>answered question</i>	7
	<i>skipped question</i>	33



Question #3:

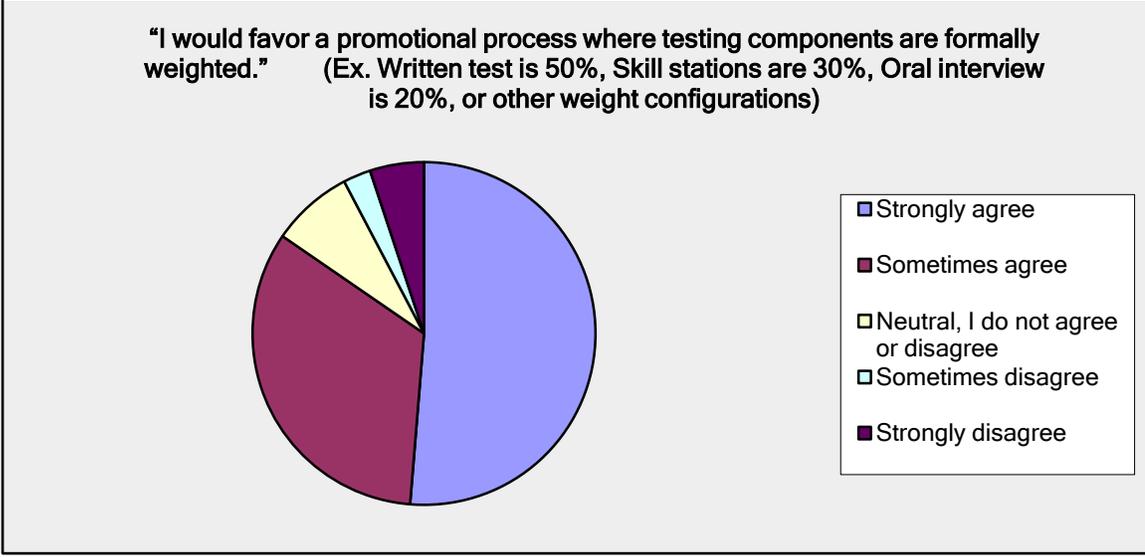
“As a member, I feel our current promotional procedures are adequate and effective.”		
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Strongly agree	5.3%	2
Sometimes agree	26.3%	10
Neutral, I do not agree or disagree	15.8%	6
Sometimes disagree	31.6%	12
Strongly disagree	21.1%	8
<i>answered question</i>		38
<i>skipped question</i>		2



Question #4:

“I would favor a promotional process where testing components are formally weighted.” (Ex. Written test is 50%, Skill stations are 30%, Oral interview is 20%, or other weight configurations)

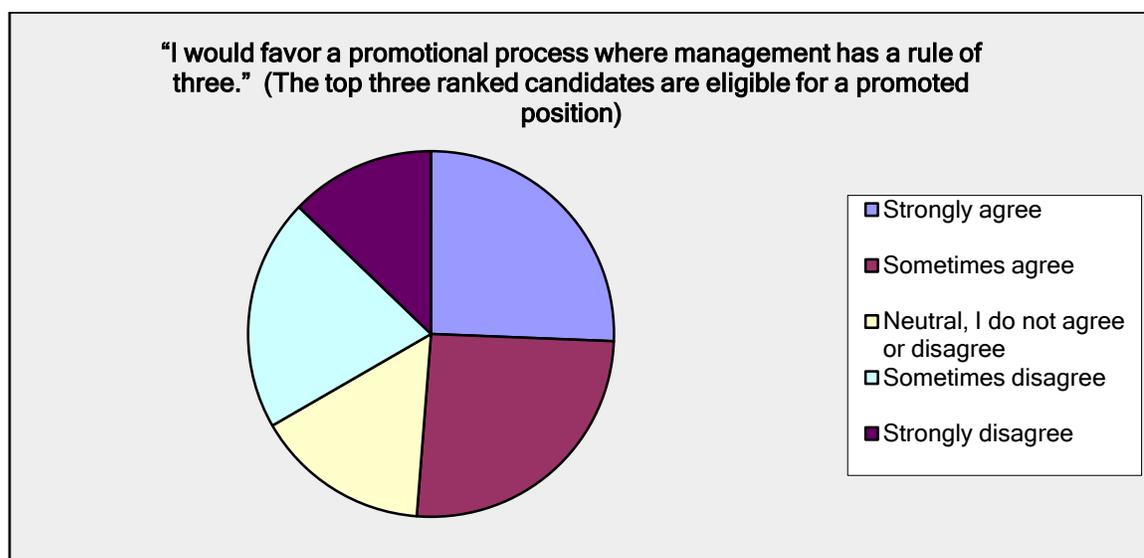
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Strongly agree	51.3%	20
Sometimes agree	33.3%	13
Neutral, I do not agree or disagree	7.7%	3
Sometimes disagree	2.6%	1
Strongly disagree	5.1%	2
<i>answered question</i>		39
<i>skipped question</i>		1



Question #5:

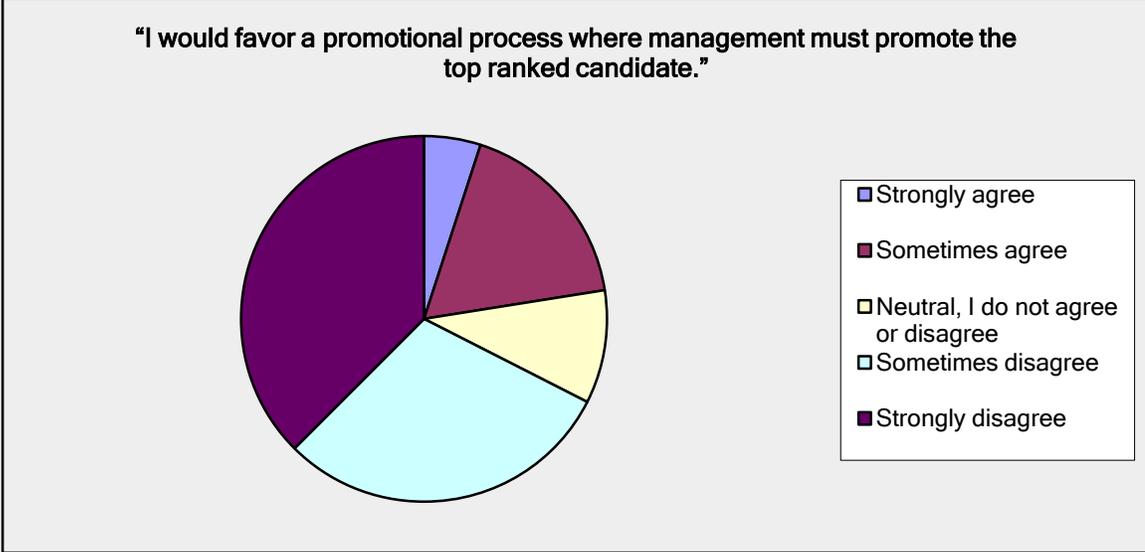
"I would favor a promotional process where management has a rule of three." (The top three ranked candidates are eligible for a promoted position)

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Strongly agree	25.6%	10
Sometimes agree	25.6%	10
Neutral, I do not agree or disagree	15.4%	6
Sometimes disagree	20.5%	8
Strongly disagree	12.8%	5
<i>answered question</i>		39
<i>skipped question</i>		1

Question #6:

"I would favor a promotional process where management must promote the top ranked candidate."

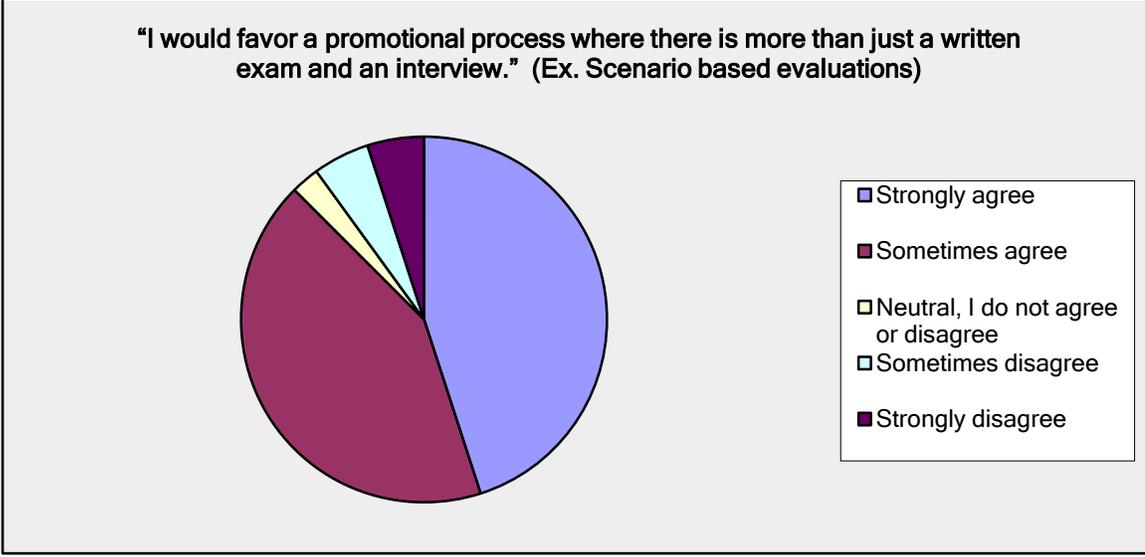
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Strongly agree	5.0%	2
Sometimes agree	17.5%	7
Neutral, I do not agree or disagree	10.0%	4
Sometimes disagree	30.0%	12
Strongly disagree	37.5%	15
<i>answered question</i>		40
<i>skipped question</i>		0



Question #7:

“I would favor a promotional process where there is more than just a written exam and an interview.” (Ex. Scenario based evaluations)

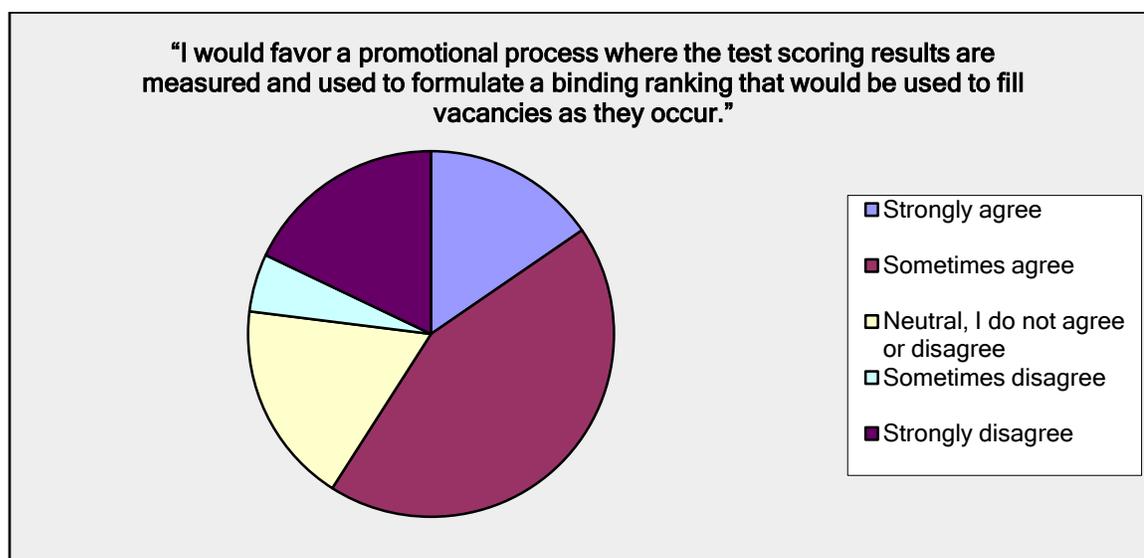
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Strongly agree	45.0%	18
Sometimes agree	42.5%	17
Neutral, I do not agree or disagree	2.5%	1
Sometimes disagree	5.0%	2
Strongly disagree	5.0%	2
<i>answered question</i>		40
<i>skipped question</i>		0



Question #8:

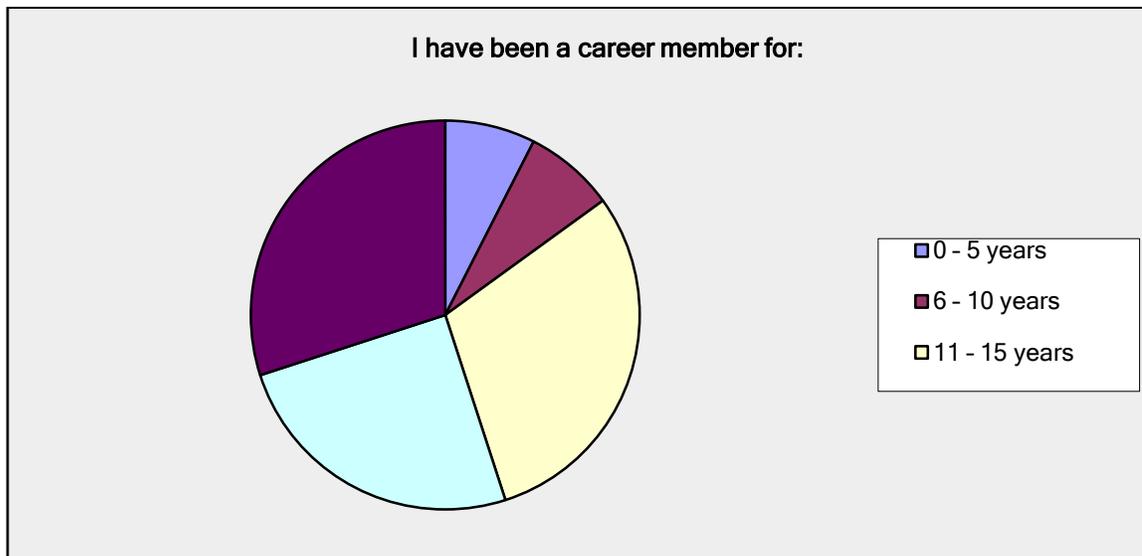
"I would favor a promotional process where the test scoring results are measured and used to formulate a binding ranking that would be used to fill vacancies as they occur."

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Strongly agree	15.4%	6
Sometimes agree	43.6%	17
Neutral, I do not agree or disagree	17.9%	7
Sometimes disagree	5.1%	2
Strongly disagree	17.9%	7
<i>answered question</i>		39
<i>skipped question</i>		1

Question #9:

I have been a career member for:

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
0 - 5 years	7.5%	3
6 - 10 years	7.5%	3
11 - 15 years	30.0%	12
16 - 20 years	25.0%	10
Greater than 20 years	30.0%	12
<i>answered question</i>		40
<i>skipped question</i>		0



Question #10:

Your current rank is:

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Firefighter	48.7%	19
Captain	30.8%	12
Battalion Chief	7.7%	3
Command staff	5.1%	2
Other (Administration, FPB, etc.)	7.7%	3
<i>answered question</i>		39
<i>skipped question</i>		1

