

## **The Need for Job Descriptions in the Greentown Fire Department**

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A proposed research project submitted to the Ohio Fire Executive Program

## CERTIFICATION STATEMENT

I hereby certify that the following statements are true:

1. This paper constitutes my own product, that where the language of others is set forth, quotation marks so indicate, and that appropriate credit is given where I have used the language, ideas, expressions, or writings of another.

2. I have affirmed the use of proper spelling and grammar in this document by using the spell and grammar check functions of a word processing software program and correcting the errors as suggested by the program.

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## **ABSTRACT**

An employee looks for and requires direction to aid him or her in their tasks and a job description gives the employee a document to which they can refer. The job description provides guidance for employees and gives them the ability to perform certain aspects of their job without the requirement of supervision. The problem with the Greentown Fire Department is that there are no job descriptions.

The purpose of this study was to discover what the content should be in a job description and what can be achieved by having an effective job description. This research project was descriptive in nature and was used to answer four research questions: (a) what benefits can be achieved for the Greentown Fire Department with well-written job descriptions; (b) what aspects should be included in an effective job description; (c) will effective job descriptions help the Greentown Fire Department advance the capabilities of the fire department; (d) how often should the job description be reformulated and is reevaluation necessary for an effective document. These questions were addressed through two types of research: review of relevant literature and survey instruments. The results indicated that a job description was necessary to aid an employee in carrying out his or her duties, and that job descriptions help to elevate job performance. The job descriptions must be kept current and applicable to the position for which it is written, and all positions will benefit from having a job description. It is recommended that job descriptions be created for all positions within the organization.

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## INTRODUCTION

### **Statement of the Problem**

The problem this study will address is the current lack of job descriptions in the Greentown Fire Department. The department has changed many things in the last ten years and has gone from being an all volunteer department to having continuous staff on station. There have been many new members brought into the department, but they have not been given any formal description of what their responsibilities are. This starts at the firefighter rank and moves all the way through to the Fire Chief of the department.

### **Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this study was to create current and usable job descriptions for the Greentown Fire Department.

The job descriptions will be presented to the Fire Chief of the department and the Board of Directors for approval and eventual adoption. A job description will be created for all ranks and positions in the fire department, and will establish guidelines for writing new job descriptions as positions are added.

The research method chosen for this applied research project was descriptive. A survey will be used to obtain information from other entities in the formulation and content of job descriptions.

### **Research Questions**

The following questions will be answered by this descriptive research:

1. What benefits can be achieved for the Greentown Fire Department with a well written job description?

2. What aspects should be included in an effective job description?
3. Will effective job descriptions help the advance the capabilities of the Greentown Fire Department employees?
4. How often should the job description be reformulated and is reevaluation necessary for an effective document?

## **BACKGROUND AND SIGNIFICANCE**

The Greentown Volunteer Fire Department, Inc. is a private fire company that contracts with the Lake Township Trustees to provide fire and emergency medical service protection for the citizens of Lake Township. Lake Township is located in the county of Stark in northeastern Ohio, due north of the city of North Canton. The primary response district of the Greentown Fire Department is nine square mile with approximately 12,000 residents, and is comprised of mostly residential properties with a small amount of light industrial. The department utilizes a part-time staffing of thirty five members to respond to approximately 600 calls per calendar year from one centrally-located station. The calls break down further into approximately 450 calls that require emergency medical services per year with fire and public service calls making up the remainder of the call volume.

The Greentown Fire Department was formed in 1939 as a civic organization to help protect the residents of Greentown from fire. The department had a Chief Engineer, an Assistant to the Chief Engineer, and two Captains. The organization was supported by volunteers and donations from the community members. The organization was managed by a board of trustees.

The organization remained the same for many years. It changed in 1990 with the addition of emergency medical services and a new officer structure. The new structure consisted of a Chief Engineer, two Assistants to the Chief Engineer, two Captains, two Lieutenants, an EMS Chief and three EMS coordinators. This officer's structure only lasted a few years, until they moved into a new building and created the officer structure that exists today. This structure features the Fire Chief, three Assistant Fire Chiefs, three Captains and three Lieutenants under the management of a nine-member Board of Directors. The department required no qualifications in order to receive a promotion and there was no method of testing used to

determine adequate knowledge or skills. The promotions in the department were done through favoritism and nepotism and the promoted were selected only by the Chief of the Department. We currently have only one person in a leadership role that was promoted under this system, and he had to test to keep the position that he now holds.

The next big change occurred in May of 2002, when the department entered into a contract with Lake Township to provide twenty-four hour paramedic coverage to the department's fire district. There had already been a part-time program in place that covered the hours of six o'clock AM to six o'clock PM, but this program only offered basic crews to supply a transport vehicle for the paramedic service that the township was in the process of disbanding. This change in coverage allowed for part-time medics to be hired that were not from the Greentown area.

The current Fire Chief of the department, who was hired in the fall of 2002, decided to relieve certain officers who were no longer fulfilling their obligations within the department. These officers were not taking an active role in the transformation of the department, and in some instances, some officers were not even completing the requirements to be members of the department. If the Fire Chief was to gain control over the department, he had to make all officers accountable or remove them from their positions.

The Fire Chief created a testing procedure for the officer's positions, and at that time there were four openings, which meant that we were in need of three Lieutenants and one Captain. There was a competitive test for the four positions that included knowledge based testing, physical agility and interviews, as well as pretest qualifications. This was all done in an effort to promote the best possible candidates.

This testing procedure did result in good officers, but they all had various backgrounds and levels of experience. The fact that the new officers came from different full time fire department jobs has caused some tension at times due to differences of opinion among the officers as to how things should be done. All of the officers are assigned certain areas and fall under an Assistant Fire Chief to promote a division of labor. We have recently rewritten our policy manual for the department, but did not include any job descriptions. While undertaking the task of writing new policies, we neglected a key element in the structure of our department. We neglected the formulation of well-written job descriptions.

We have had officers that want to strive for more but do not understand the level of authority that they have. They want to create a better department and make sure that members are following the guidelines set forth by the policies, but they do not know how far their own authority goes. One of our younger Lieutenants approached the Assistant Chiefs with the question: is he allowed to discipline? We asked him what the question was pertaining to and he wanted to know if he had the authority to make members follow the policy manual. We said absolutely, that is your job. He then wanted to know if he had the ability to send someone home. We said that he could base this on the policy violated, such as the substance abuse policy. Another question that arose from a Lieutenant was why only a Chief grade officer or Captain could approve a schedule change and he could not. We explained that this was more of an administrative area and that based on the level of authority, a higher ranking officer should make that decision. After explaining these things to the lower officers, they understood the boundaries of the position that they held a little better. If these officers had a job description in place, they would have understood the position and the responsibilities that come with it much better than they do now. All positions within the Greentown Fire Department require a job description in

order to help delineate their job requirements. Job descriptions will help create a more cohesive working environment for all personnel within the department.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

The U.S. Department of Labor shows the description for firefighter as follows:

“As a full-time paid member of the fire department, combats, extinguishes, and prevents fires and performs rescue operations in structural and airfield environments. Performs maintenance on own equipment and quarters. Wears protective clothing and breathing devices; drives fire and crash equipment; and operates a variety of firefighting equipment such as hoses, extinguishers, ladders and axes. May hold certification as an Emergency Medical Technician” [sic](U.S Department of Labor).

This description, as quoted, serves as a very dry and basic example of a job description for the position of firefighter. This description leaves much to be desired from the standpoint of what a firefighter actually does, as well as the grammar used to construct this job description.

“In some companies, job descriptions are dry, outdated documents whose main purpose seems to be taking up space in a filing cabinet” (Mader-Clark, 2006). In the Greentown Fire Department, job descriptions do not exist. The department is in need of job descriptions to provide a foundation for an effective and productive work environment.

“A position description should provide a full understanding of the content and objectives of a job by defining and clarifying its responsibilities, authority, relationships, and accountability” (Famularo, 1971). Simply stated, a job description provides direction for an employee to understand his everyday tasks as well as describe a scope of duties. “Each member of the department should have a clear job description, clearly defined goals for each task assigned, and access to current operating procedures” (Gootnick, 2000). The job description needs to be available for all the employee’s to be able to reference in order to help perform their

job duties. “Employee job descriptions that sit unused in a drawer, or worse, filed in the HR office, are a waste of time” (Heathfield, 2011). When job descriptions do not exist, we can have difficulty holding someone accountable for understanding their position within the organization. All of these statements show a need that has not been filled in the Greentown Fire Department.

Job descriptions form a basis for what is expected from new employees, thus providing a road map for their future. “Job descriptions provide a written record of job duties and responsibilities” (Erwin Rausch, 2008). It is this record that provides a place of reference for the employee to refer to when he is questioning his role in the department. Molly Brennan (2010) writes that “Crafting the right job description not only ensures you’ll get the right candidate for an open position, it will also help you bring onboard and evaluate new hires as they adjust and grow into their roles.” This leads us to believe that the job description needs to be presented to the employee prior to him or her even being interviewed. This is further illustrated by Mr. Buckman when he wrote, “Effective recruiting requires creating a written job description of the position that details knowledge, skills and ability needed to be a top performer” (Buckman, III, 2011). The two previous quotes both illustrate, through the use of terms like “candidate” and “recruit”, that the prospective hire should receive a job description prior to accepting any position. The Greentown Fire Department has just recently made a formal interview part of the new hire process; the members were previously hired based on resume and references. While resumes and references are an important part to the initial phase of hiring, some of these candidates had never even been met with face to face prior to them being hired. Even though we have this process in place, Dr. Arthur R. Pell states that “you still need a written job description in order to begin the hiring process” (Pell, 1995). This is further reiterated by Rom Hiraki (2011) when he states that “The job description or position description will tell you what

knowledge, skills and abilities (KSAs) the agency is looking for in a successful candidate.” The term “candidate” is used again here showing the need for job descriptions prior to the employee ever entering into an agreement for employment. “When the human resources department posts a promotional announcement, a full or partial narrative job description is usually included” (Ward, 2006).

The new candidate at the Greentown Fire Department never had a job description in order for them to understand what duties are to be expected of them; they were only told during the training process. “The best way to avoid future problems with an individual is to make it very clear what the expectations are with regard to training, attendance, certification and qualification, and response” (Buckman III, 2011). These items would clearly be defined with a document that an employee would be able to refer to. “A narrative job description summarizes the scope of the job and provides examples of the typical tasks that a person holding that position would be expected to perform” (Ward, 2006). Therefore, providing a job description to the applicant will give him or her insight into the requirements of your department and may weed out potential problem applicants before the application ever reaches the administrator’s desk. “A well-written and frequently updated job description will be useful throughout an employee’s tenure with your company, and throughout the ‘life’ of that job” (Mader-Clark, 2006). A job description can also work against having a productive employee, Susan Heathfield writes, “Poorly written employee job descriptions, on the other hand, add to work place confusion, hurt communication, and make people feel as if they don’t know what is expected of them” (Heathfield, 2011).

The content of the job description is crucial to the effectiveness of the document. The content must be of a consistent nature, but also must be incremental as the duties increase in correlation with the rank of the firefighter, and a job description must exist with each labeled

position. There are certain aspects of job descriptions that should be included. Joseph J. Famularo (1979) states that “at least four general areas are usually included: function, responsibility and authority, relationships, and accountability.” Another perspective given on what is to be included is the following; “The reporting structure, Basic Responsibilities, Key Goals and/or outcomes, Qualifications, Salary and benefits information, and How to apply and what to include with the application” (Brennan, 2010). The first description is a more concise way of stating what the second states to include; they are both similar in nature. Susan M. Heathfield (2011) also writes that, “Employee job descriptions are written statements that describe the duties, responsibilities, required qualifications, and reporting relationships of a particular job.” The job description must function as a road map for the employee to follow and there are varying views on what is to be included in the job description document. Susan Heathfield shows these bulleted points about what is to be included in a job description;

“These are the normal components of the job description:

- Overall position description with general areas of responsibility listed,
- Essential functions of the job described with a couple of examples of each,
- Required knowledge, skills, and abilities,
- Required education and experience,
- A description of physical demands, and
- A description of the work environment” (Heathfield, About.com, 2011).

We must also evaluate whether a job description can be too comprehensive of a document and places a set of handcuffs on our employee’s. Joseph Famularo states “The description should be sufficiently complete to describe the job, but should not be overly detailed” (Famularo, 1971). Another way of examining the document is that, there needs to be some room

for self-thinking and ways for the employee to flourish. “A job description isn’t a rigid circumscription of functions, and it consists of more than just suggested guidelines. You should make provisions so that deviations, additions, and variations are always open for discussion” (Pell, 1995). “The important thing is to come up with a concise description and analysis of what the job requires and what the employee does and gets accomplished most of the time” (Famularo, 1971). By creating this job description, you do not want to limit your ability to effectively manage the members of your department; you want to be able to lead them in the proper direction. You also want to have some freedom to lead your employee’s in new directions and to do that you need to have a disclaimer statement. “All JDs should include a disclaimer that clearly states the JD is only a summary of the typical functions of the job, not an exhaustive or comprehensive list of all possible job responsibilities, tasks and duties. Disclaimers should also state that the responsibilities, tasks, and duties of the job holder might differ from those outlined in the JD and that other duties, as assigned, might be part of the job” (Sayed, 2011).

The job description is a document that needs to be revised and updated on a regular basis. Joseph J. Famularo (1979) states that “A job description will be practically useless or even misleading if it merely gives a picture of what the job used to be.” It must be written in manner so as not to handcuff the manager. This document must have avenues that allow the manager to enact changes in the description. Yet Susan M. Heathfield (2011) states that you need to “Make certain employee job descriptions have enough flexibility so individuals can “work outside the box.” The document needs to be able to be molded and shaped throughout the lifetime of the position for which has been created. “The job description is a living document, one that you are entitled to change if you wish (always make sure your employees have the most current

version)” (Mader-Clark, 2006). Even though you are entitled to change it, it does not mean that you have to change it, if it is not broke, do not fix it. Susan M. Heathfield (2011) states that you need to “Review the job description periodically to make sure it accurately reflects what the employee is doing and your expectations of results from the employee.” If the document is still current and meets all of your expectations, then there is no need to change it. All of these facts point to a very difficult task of making an effective article, one that is descriptive enough, but yet open enough, not to create robotic employees.

“Develop job descriptions to help you articulate the most important outcomes you need from an employee performing a particular job. Develop job descriptions as a communication tool to tell coworkers where their job leaves off and the job of another employee starts” (Heathfield, About.com, 2011). The literature all points to the fact that a well-written job description is a fundamental element to any work environment. “The best way to develop a complete job description is to get your entire team into the act” (Pell, 1995). The job description itself creates a fundamental basis for anything that happens within an organization. Realizing that “Overwritten or vague job descriptions are not effective tools for hiring or managing” (Mader-Clark, 2006) can help create useful and informative job descriptions for our organization.

Dr. Arthur R. Pell states that “you still need a written job description in order to begin the hiring process” (Pell, 1995).

The job description is a living document, one that must be tamed and controlled. If the document is written poorly, it will not provide the guidance that is intended for this type of document, but if it is well-written it can assist you in leading your department. The document can be a collaboration between different levels within the department, as long as the consensus fits the model that has been outlined by the literature. This is a multifaceted document that must

contain a position description, a skills and abilities area, list of applicable duties, supervisory limits, descriptions of work environment, required education, and a disclaimer statement. It is also evident that this document needs to be presented to the applicant with his application package, for better understanding of the position for which he is applying. If the model that has been presented through the literature review is followed, a well-crafted document should be able to be created. All of the literature has lead the researcher to see a deficiency in the Greentown Fire Department due to the lack of job descriptions.

## PROCEDURES

The first phase used to gain information for this applied research project was the use of documentation from multiple sources in order to validate the actual need for job descriptions. The literature from books, training manuals, periodicals and online journals were used to gain evidence to prove the research questions. All of these materials gave a consensus of what things needed to be included in the job description.

A primary survey will be used to collect data for this research project. This survey will be sent out using an online instrument for data collection. This will be sent out to the Fire Chiefs in the state of Ohio using the email database from the Ohio Fire Chiefs' Association. This will be a voluntary survey that will encompass many different types of agencies. This survey will be sent out to all agencies in the Ohio Fire Chiefs' Association database that are located in Northeastern Ohio and will encompass 261 agencies. The agencies will be selected randomly so that results may be compared between the overall results and departments that have similar demographics with the Greentown Fire Department. It will be formulated to include questions that will give insight into what is actually is being done in the area of job descriptions and this will give insight into how the fire service views and maintains their job descriptions. The survey will give indication into who creates the job description for the organization and how often they are revised. It will also show if immediate supervisors have a say in what is included or does each job description come from the administration. The survey will be further filtered to show departments with similar structure and population to the Greentown Fire Department, thus providing a comparison for what other department that are similar to the Greentown Fire Department are doing with job descriptions. The survey will not show a relationship between

private fire companies versus government agencies, as there has been no relevant information gathered from the literature review as to this being a factor in having job descriptions. A copy of this survey is included as Appendix 1 and the results of that survey are included in Appendix 2. To facilitate easy comparison, a breakdown of departments with similar demographics and how they answered the survey questions will be included as Appendix 3.

### **Definition of Terms**

Job Description: a detailed written account, agreed between management and worker, of all the duties and responsibilities which together make up a particular job (Dictionary.com, 2012)

Standard Operating Procedures: a set of fixed instructions or steps for carrying out usually routine operations. Abbreviation: SOP (Dictionary.com, 2012)

JD: abbreviation for the term Job Description

KSA's: abbreviation for Knowledge, Skills, and Abilities

Summary Disclaimer: clearly states that the description is only a summary of the typical functions of the job, not an exhaustive or comprehensive list of all possible job responsibilities, tasks, and duties. Disclaimers should also state that the responsibilities, tasks, and duties of the jobholder might differ from those outlined in the job description and that other duties, as assigned, might be part of the job. This disclaimer is most important in a labor union environment where the document can be literally interpreted. (Shackles, 2011)

### **Limitations of the Study**

The limitation of this study was the number of respondents to the survey. The survey was sent to 261 people, of which sixty-three completed the survey. This survey was sent out through third party e-mail and no additional contact was made by the researcher to try and aid in the retrieval of more surveys. When the survey was sent out, it was given a deadline of two weeks to complete. With this shortened time frame, the researcher did not feel it was necessary to send a follow-up email to procure more results. The vast majority of surveys were returned within the first week of being sent to the recipients. Another limitation to the survey was the lack of all questions being answered by the respondents. This limitation is not understood by the researcher, as no explanation was given by the respondents. The researcher also did not do an internal survey due to the departments' complete lack of any formal job description.

## RESULTS

The research study utilized for this project was sent out through electronic mail and was sent to 261 fire departments which netted returns of sixty-three participants. This accounts for a total return percentage of twenty-four percent. There was no follow-up done with the surveys that were not returned and the initial survey included a deadline to assist the researcher with the time line of the project. The survey was then broke down further to show departments with similar demographics to the Greentown Fire Department.

The demographics of the surveys that were returned showed that a large percent were of demographics similar to those of the Greentown Fire Department. The survey showed that 52.4% of the respondents were from combination departments and 44.4% were from a population size of 10,001 to 25,000. The Greentown Fire Department falls within these limits and helps to validate the survey. The survey was then filtered using these two primary demographics and it was determined that of all of the respondents, eighteen surveys met both selection criteria.

The survey went on further to determine how many years the respondent had been in the fire service and what level of leadership they had been elevated to. This survey showed that 92.1% have been in the fire service sixteen years or greater and that 96.8% have achieved the level of either Chief or Chief grade officer.

The first two questions of the survey were used to determine if the department had job descriptions and if the person responding knows of a time that department was without job descriptions. An overwhelming fifty-six (88.9%) of the surveys returned showed their department as having job descriptions, and of those that have job descriptions thirty-four do not recall a time in their tenure that their department has not had a job description. When the filter

was applied to these areas, sixteen of the departments that were similar had job descriptions and over half have always had job descriptions. This positively shows that a majority of the departments that returned the survey have job descriptions in place.

The third and fourth question were used to determine the responders opinion on the ability to have up-to-date job descriptions available and if they elevate job performance. The survey showed that a vast majority or sixty-two of the respondents felt that it is important to have up-to-date job descriptions readily available for their employees; and fifty-three of those returning the survey felt that job descriptions help elevate the performance of their employees. When examining the filtered responses, all respondents felt it was important to have them available and fifteen stated that it elevated their employees' job performance. These questions help validate the third research question that was presented, by the fact that whether you examine the entire survey or the filtered survey, eighty-four percent felt that the job description will elevate employee performance.

A question that was presented in this survey was used to determine the actual content of the job descriptions and to see the similarities between what was shown to be proper content from the literature review. Of the sixty-one respondents that replied to this question, all of them have job duties as part of their job description and the percentages of all other areas mimicked the literature review as to what areas should be contained in an effective document. When examining the differences between the entire survey group and the filtered group, there were two distinct differences. The first area that showed the biggest difference was the description of work environment. The entire survey showed this included sixty-two percent of the time, while the filtered group only included this forty-seven percent of the time. Then when you evaluate the summary disclaimer, the entire group showed it included twenty-nine percent of the time and the

focused survey showed in included forty-one percent of the time. The question also had the option to add additional things the respondent had that were important to their document, and one person replied with supervision limits or authority level.

The seventh and eighth survey questions ask the respondents about the review process for their departments' job descriptions. The questions of how often it was revised and who was in charge of reviewing the document were presented to the respondents. It was found that thirty-four of the respondents reviewed their job descriptions every two to five years, while twelve reviewed them at a frequency of ten years or greater; once again, the smaller focus group mirrored the results of the entire survey. It was also show that in both instances the Chief was the person who would oversee the review and revision of the job description document. These results reflect what is being done in the area of revision as far as the survey is concerned.

A question was proposed as to what point in the process of becoming an employee that this person received the job description. Of the fifty-eight respondents that answered this question and looking at the available answers, the two most popular answers "were with the application packet" and "on the first day of work'. This again mimicked the results of the filtered group. This would show that those who returned this survey feel that it is important to give the new employee a job description before he begins working. This same theme is echoed in the literature review.

The tenth question looked at how much importance was placed on the knowledge of the job description when compared to the knowledge of the departments Standard Operating Procedures. When examining the responses of the sixty-one who answered the question, it was found that forty-nine felt that it was the same amount of importance or greater amount of importance that was placed on knowledge of the job description when comparing them to the

knowledge of the SOP's, and once again the statistics were very similar with the focus group. Many fire departments rely on SOP's for their daily operations and if eighty percent of the respondents feel that the job descriptions are as important as the SOP's, than this leads the researcher to believe that the respondents feel that this is an important document.

The eleventh question evaluated how the job description reflected in the abilities of the employee and his ability to perform his duties. The respondents' answers showed that not only does the job description help the employee understand his job, but the respondents feel it helps the employee succeed within the department.

All of the results of the survey point to the job description being a very important document within the fire department.

## DISCUSSION

It has become evident, through the literature reviewed and the results of the research survey, that job descriptions are in place and are a document that is relied on for hands off direction for today's employee. The employee needs direction and understanding of what he or she is to do while employed by an organization. Without some type of document giving that person direction, they will either be inquiring for basic guidance, or worse yet, do nothing at all. The job description is a vital part of an organization's ability to effectively manage and lead their employees', and is a tool that can benefit the employee for their entire tenure and help them in their quest for advancement within the organization.

The thought behind research was to provide documentation that would shed light, either positively or negatively, to one side of a defined topic; yet there was no negative information to be found about what a job description can do for an organization. The act of crafting a job description is an important task that requires diligence and input from a variety of sources within the organization. "The best way to develop a complete job description is to get your entire team into the act" (Pell, 1995). This leads me to believe that the job description should not just be crafted by the Chief of the department, but collaborated on by the other officers and firefighters that make up the department. The survey results showed that many people have input into the job description with the Chief having the largest part of the input. I do not believe that this is to mean that everyone should have input, but that peers should be selected from the masses to help construct the document.

There must also be careful consideration given to the contents of the document so as not to be so restrictive that an employee has no room to grow and advance. Susan M. Heathfield (2011) stated that you need to "Make certain employee job descriptions have enough flexibility

so individuals can “work outside the box.” The literature review showed multiple areas that are to be contained in an effective job description. I took this information and surveyed what areas were contained by the people that have job descriptions in place; and out of the eight major sections identified in the literature review, six of those areas were contained more than sixty-two percent of the time. The survey helps to solidify the information that was discovered in the literature review and points this researcher the areas that should be contained in the job description.

“The job description is a living document, one that you are entitled to change if you wish (always make sure your employees have the most current version)” (Mader-Clark, 2006). The job description should not remain static, it needs to be re-evaluated. I say re-evaluated due to the fact that just because you are looking the document over again doesn’t mean that it has to be revised. If the document still meets the needs of the position that it was created for then there is no need to revise the document. If it has worked for the last three years, and you do not see a need for any further job duties or responsibilities, leave it alone. On the other hand, if you realize that something is not working, then take this opportunity to revise and formulate a new document. As with the creation of the original document, you may use a team of members to figure out why it is not working and generate ways to fix the problem. “A job description will be practically useless or even misleading if it merely gives a picture of what the job used to be.” (Famularo, 1971) Simply stated, when the job changes, so must the document that goes with that position. The literature did not lend itself to any particular time frame by which the document should be reviewed, other than when the position changes, but when surveyed a majority of the responses were in the two to five year area. This seems like a reasonable amount of time for looking into the revision of the job description.

When examining the survey, I wanted to know what others felt were the best benefits of having a job description for their employees. The number one answer was increased understanding of their job responsibilities, and the second was helping the employee succeed within the department. If having job descriptions in the department gives me nothing else other than these two things, the department will grow and flourish. The idea of having your employees understand and succeed; not a revolutionary thought, but one that we as leaders want for our employees. I want the members of my department to succeed and grow, because when this happens the department as a whole grows. The job description will be fundamental in the advancing of the department and this is shown by the answers that were given by the survey. The true measure of the department will be the success of its employees.

The creation and implementation of job descriptions for the department will be a daunting task that will require time in order to complete, but a very worthwhile one to say the least. The literature and survey both strongly indicate that a well-written and compelling job description can elevate the performance of an employee, which in turn, raises the ability of the entire department. It has been shown, through the literature review and the surveys completed, that it would be a disservice to the Greentown Fire Department not to create job descriptions for this department and it would also be a disservice to the employees of the Greentown Fire Department not to give them a document that would help them elevate their own personal performance. The foundation for creating a job description has been laid through this research; all that is left to do is create the document.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

The purpose of this study was to examine the creation of job descriptions, the process by which they are created, and if job descriptions can be a valuable tool for the Greentown Fire Department. The evaluation of multiple literature sources and a research survey has led the researcher to the following recommendations.

The first recommendation from the researcher is that job descriptions need to be created for every position within the Greentown Fire Department. This would include job descriptions for the following positions; firefighter, Chief's Clerk, Lieutenant, Captain and Assistant Chief. To create these new documents we should utilize a team of fire department members; it should not just be created solely by the Chief of the department. This idea was evident in both the literature review and the survey results. The job description for the Fire Chief would also be created, but it would be utilized by the Board of Directors in ensuring that the Chief is meeting the expectations that they have set forth for that position.

The second recommendation is that we use the formula that has been outlined by the literature review to craft this document. The literature and surveys showed that the areas to be included are listed as the following:

- Job Duties
- Position Description
- Required Knowledge Skills and Abilities
- Required Education and Experience
- A description of physical demands
- A description of work environment
- A summary disclaimer

- Supervisory Limits

This list is derived from the literature and is reinforced with the responses from the survey. The survey did not show if one particular respondent had all of these areas in their document, but a significant amount of responses were show in all of the areas listed above.

The third recommendation would be to include the job description as part of the application packet. This would provide any applicant with the job requirements as well as what is expected of them while employed with the Greentown Fire Department. This recommendation reflects the results of both the filtered and complete survey. The over whelming majority of those that responded stated that they distribute their job description with the application packet. This idea of distributing the job description was further reiterated in the literature review by Dr. Arthur R. Pell who states that “you still need a written job description in order to begin the hiring process” (Pell, 1995)

The fourth recommendation is the institution of a formal review process of the job description. This process was shown to be vital for effective job descriptions through the literature review and it was also verified through the survey to be an active process that is already in place in many departments. There was no explicit time given for the review process, but the overwhelming response from the survey was the range of two to five years. The researcher is recommending a period of two years from the initial instituion of the job description for the first review of the new documents.

The research indicates that effective job descriptions can elevate the department and help with the cohesiveness of the organization. This was shown though the literature review and the survey, and the focus survey mimicked the outcome of the complete survey thus further validating the survey for the Greentown Fire Department. The job description is a tool that can

help create an environment that eases tension and provides direction for its employees. The process will be one that is ongoing and will require evaluation as to the effectiveness of the document that is created; therefore members will need to be allowed to openly share their feelings on the whether the document is assisting them, creating a problem, or further causing undue strain. The purpose of creating the job description is to provide an environment in which all members can flourish and understand their place within the organization. With due diligence, this process will create a better department, one that is looked upon as a place that is enjoyable and allows the employee to broaden themselves within the organization.

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**APPENDIX 1 – RESEARCH SURVEY**

**The Need for Job Descriptions in the Greentown Fire Department**

**An Applied Research Project for the OFE Program**

**By Jeremy Guenther**

**Research Survey**

Directions: Please have a department member that works with, or help created the job descriptions for your department fill out this survey. When possible an officer would be appreciated. If you would please answer the following questions with the most appropriate answer. Your help in completing this project is greatly appreciated.

**Question 1**

**Does your department have job descriptions for every position in your department?**

Yes                       No

**If the answer is no, do you have job descriptions for certain positions and if so, what positions?**

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**Question 2**

**Has your department always had job descriptions?**

Yes                       No

**If the answer is no, when were your job descriptions created?**

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**Question 3**

**Do you feel that it is beneficial to have up to date job descriptions readily available for your employee's?**

Yes                       No

**Question 4**

**Do you feel that job descriptions help elevate the job performance of you employee's?**

Yes                       No

**Question 5**

**Which members of your department have input in the content of your job description?**

**(Please check all that apply)**

Chief     Chief Grade Officer  
 Captain     Lieutenant  
 Firefighter     Administration  
 Other

**Question 6**

**What are the contents of your job description? (Please check all that apply)**

- Job Duties
- Required education and experience
- Position Description
- A Description of physical demands
- Required knowledge, skills and abilities
- A Description of work environment
- Pay scale
- A summary disclaimer

**Please list anything else you consider vital to you departments job description.**

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**Question 7**

**How often are your job descriptions reviewed and or revised?**

- Yearly
- 2-5 years
- 6-9 years
- 10 years or more
- Never

**If the answer is never, why do you feel they do not need reviewed?**

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**Question 8**

**If you review your job descriptions, who is responsible for undertaking of this task?**

- |                                      |  |
|--------------------------------------|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Chief       | <input type="checkbox"/> Chief Grade Officer |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Captain     | <input type="checkbox"/> Lieutenant          |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Firefighter | <input type="checkbox"/> Administration      |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Other       |  |

**Question 9**

**When do new employees receive their job description?**

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> With the application packet                        | <input type="checkbox"/> At the interview       |
| <input type="checkbox"/> After the interview, but before they begin working | <input type="checkbox"/> The first day at work  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> After orientation                                  | <input type="checkbox"/> Whenever asked for one |

**Question 10**

**How much importance is placed on your employee's knowledge of his or her job description when compared to his knowledge of departmental SOP's?**

- Important
- Above Average
- Average
- Below Average
- Unimportant

**Question 11**

**What positive effect, do you feel; having an effective job description has on your department? (Please check all that apply)**

- Employee understanding of job responsibilities
- To provide hands off direction for the employee
- To provide employee with boundaries
- To help eliminate the need for discipline
- To provide conflict resolution within the department
- To help the employee succeed within your department

**Question 12**

**How would you best describe your fire department?**

- Full time
- Part-time
- Combination
- Volunteer

**Question 13**

**What size population does your department serve?**

- Less than 10,000
- 10,001 to 25,000
- 25,001 to 50,000
- Greater than 50,000

**Question 14****How many years have you been in the fire service?** Less than 5 years 6 to 10 years 11 to 15 years 16 to 20 years 21 to 25 years Greater than 26 years**Question 15****What rank do you currently hold in your fire department?** Chief Chief Grade Officer Captain Lieutenant Firefighter Administration Other

Thank you for taking time from your valuable schedule to help me complete my research in this endeavor. I greatly appreciate all the information that you have given me. If you wish a copy of the results of this survey please include in the following information. All information received will remain anonymous.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City/State: \_\_\_\_\_

Zip Code: \_\_\_\_\_

## APPENDIX 2 – COMPLETE SURVEY RESULTS

### Question 1

Does your department have job descriptions for every position in your department?		
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Yes	88.9%	56
No	11.1%	7
If the answer is no, do you have job descriptions for certain positions and if so, what positions?		6
<i>answered question</i>		<b>63</b>
<i>skipped question</i>		<b>0</b>

### Question 2

Has your department always had job descriptions?		
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Yes	54.8%	34
No	45.2%	28
If the answer is no, when were your job descriptions created?		19
<i>answered question</i>		<b>62</b>
<i>skipped question</i>		<b>1</b>

### Question 3

Do you feel that it is beneficial to have up to date job descriptions readily available for your employee's?		
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Yes	98.4%	62
No	1.6%	1
<i>answered question</i>		<b>63</b>
<i>skipped question</i>		<b>0</b>

## Question 4

Do you feel that job descriptions help elevate the job performance of your employee's?		
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Yes	84.1%	53
No	15.9%	10
<i>answered question</i>		<b>63</b>
<i>skipped question</i>		<b>0</b>

## Question 5

Which members of your department have input in the content of your job description? (Please check all that apply)		
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Chief	96.8%	60
Chief Grade Officer	51.6%	32
Captain	54.8%	34
Lieutenant	38.7%	24
Firefighter	22.6%	14
Administrator	38.7%	24
Other	16.1%	10
<i>answered question</i>		<b>62</b>
<i>skipped question</i>		<b>1</b>

## Question 6

What are the contents of your job description? (Please check all that apply)		
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Job Duties	100.0%	61
Position Description	95.1%	58
Required Knowledge, Skills and Abilities	86.9%	53
Pay Scale	16.4%	10
Required Education and Experience	63.9%	39
A Description of Physical Demands	65.6%	40
A Description of Work Environment	62.3%	38
A Summary Disclaimer	29.5%	18
Please list anything else you consider vital to your departments job description.		2
<i>answered question</i>		<b>61</b>
<i>skipped question</i>		<b>2</b>

## Question 7

How often are your job descriptions reviewed and or revised?		
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Yearly	6.8%	4
2-5 Years	57.6%	34
6-9 Years	6.8%	4
10 Years or more	20.3%	12
Never	8.5%	5
If the answer is never why do you feel they do not need reviewed?		5
<i>answered question</i>		<b>59</b>
<i>skipped question</i>		<b>4</b>

## Question 8

If you review your job descriptions, who is responsible for the undertaking of this task? (Please check all that apply)		
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Chief	81.0%	47
Chief Grade Officer	37.9%	22
Captain	29.3%	17
Lieutenant	17.2%	10
Firefighter	6.9%	4
Administration	32.8%	19
Other	15.5%	9
<i>answered question</i>		<b>58</b>
<i>skipped question</i>		<b>5</b>

## Question 9

When do new employees receive their job description?		
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
With the application packet	32.8%	19
At the interview	15.5%	9
After the interview, but before they begin working	19.0%	11
The first day at work	24.1%	14
After orientation	5.2%	3
Whenever asked for one	3.4%	2
<i>answered question</i>		<b>58</b>
<i>skipped question</i>		<b>5</b>

## Question 10

How much importance is placed on your employee's knowledge of his or her job description when compared to his knowledge of departmental SOP's?		
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Important	26.2%	16
Above Average	19.7%	12
Average	34.4%	21
Below Average	14.8%	9
Unimportant	4.9%	3
<i>answered question</i>		<b>61</b>
<i>skipped question</i>		<b>2</b>

## Question 11

What positive effect, do you feel, having an effective job description has on your department? (Please check all that apply)		
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Increased employee understanding of their job responsibilities	88.5%	54
To provide hands off direction for the employee	26.2%	16
To provide the employee with boundaries	41.0%	25
To help eliminate the need for discipline	16.4%	10
To provide conflict resolution within the department	14.8%	9
To help the employee succeed within your department	54.1%	33
<i>answered question</i>		<b>61</b>
<i>skipped question</i>		<b>2</b>

## Question 12

How would you best describe your fire department?		
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Full Time	31.7%	20
Part Time	4.8%	3
Combination	52.4%	33
Volunteer	11.1%	7
<i>answered question</i>		<b>63</b>
<i>skipped question</i>		<b>0</b>

## Question 13

What size population does your department serve?		
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Less than 10,000	30.2%	19
10,001 to 25,000	44.4%	28
25,001 to 50,000	20.6%	13
Greater than 50,000	4.8%	3
<i>answered question</i>		<b>63</b>
<i>skipped question</i>		<b>0</b>

## Question 14

How many years have you been in the fire service?		
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Less than 5 years	0.0%	0
6 to 10 years	1.6%	1
11 to 15 years	6.3%	4
16 to 20 years	7.9%	5
21 to 25 years	17.5%	11
Greater than 25 years	66.7%	42
<i>answered question</i>		<b>63</b>
<i>skipped question</i>		<b>0</b>

## Question 15

What rank do you currently hold in your fire department?		
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Chief	73.0%	46
Chief Grade Officer	23.8%	15
Captain	1.6%	1
Lieutenant	1.6%	1
Firefighter	0.0%	0
Administration	0.0%	0
Other	0.0%	0
<i>answered question</i>		<b>63</b>
<i>skipped question</i>		<b>0</b>

### APPENDIX 3 – FILTERED SURVEY RESULTS

#### Question 1

Does your department have job descriptions for every position in your department?		
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Yes	88.9%	16
No	11.1%	2
If the answer is no, do you have job descriptions for certain positions and if so, what positions?		0
<i>answered question</i>		<b>18</b>
<i>skipped question</i>		<b>0</b>

#### Question 2

Has your department always had job descriptions?		
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Yes	52.9%	9
No	47.1%	8
If the answer is no, when were your job descriptions created?		2
<i>answered question</i>		<b>17</b>
<i>skipped question</i>		<b>1</b>

#### Question 3

Do you feel that it is beneficial to have up to date job descriptions readily available for your employee's?		
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Yes	100.0%	18
No	0.0%	0
<i>answered question</i>		<b>18</b>
<i>skipped question</i>		<b>0</b>

## Question 4

Do you feel that job descriptions help elevate the job performance of your employee's?		
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Yes	83.3%	15
No	16.7%	3
<i>answered question</i>		<b>18</b>
<i>skipped question</i>		<b>0</b>

## Question 5

Which members of your department have input in the content of your job description? (Please check all that apply)		
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Chief	100.0%	17
Chief Grade Officer	58.8%	10
Captain	58.8%	10
Lieutenant	47.1%	8
Firefighter	11.8%	2
Administrator	52.9%	9
Other	11.8%	2
<i>answered question</i>		<b>17</b>
<i>skipped question</i>		<b>1</b>

## Question 6

What are the contents of your job description? (Please check all that apply)		
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Job Duties	100.0%	17
Position Description	94.1%	16
Required Knowledge, Skills and Abilities	82.4%	14
Pay Scale	23.5%	4
Required Education and Experience	58.8%	10
A Description of Physical Demands	52.9%	9
A Description of Work Environment	47.1%	8
A Summary Disclaimer	41.2%	7
Please list anything else you consider vital to your departments job description.		1
<i>answered question</i>		<b>17</b>
<i>skipped question</i>		<b>1</b>

## Question 7

How often are your job descriptions reviewed and or revised?		
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Yearly	6.3%	1
2-5 Years	43.8%	7
6-9 Years	12.5%	2
10 Years or more	25.0%	4
Never	12.5%	2
If the answer is never why do you feel they do not need reviewed?		1
<i>answered question</i>		<b>16</b>
<i>skipped question</i>		<b>2</b>

## Question 8

If you review your job descriptions, who is responsible for the undertaking of this task? (Please check all that apply)		
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Chief	86.7%	13
Chief Grade Officer	53.3%	8
Captain	53.3%	8
Lieutenant	26.7%	4
Firefighter	6.7%	1
Administration	53.3%	8
Other	6.7%	1
<i>answered question</i>		<b>15</b>
<i>skipped question</i>		<b>3</b>

## Question 9

When do new employees receive their job description?		
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
With the application packet	47.1%	8
At the interview	5.9%	1
After the interview, but before they begin working	11.8%	2
The first day at work	35.3%	6
After orientation	0.0%	0
Whenever asked for one	0.0%	0
<i>answered question</i>		<b>17</b>
<i>skipped question</i>		<b>1</b>

## Question 10

How much importance is placed on your employee's knowledge of his or her job description when compared to his knowledge of departmental SOP's?		
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Important	23.5%	4
Above Average	23.5%	4
Average	35.3%	6
Below Average	11.8%	2
Unimportant	5.9%	1
<i>answered question</i>		<b>17</b>
<i>skipped question</i>		<b>1</b>

## Question 11

What positive effect, do you feel, having an effective job description has on your department? (Please check all that apply)		
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Increased employee understanding of their job responsibilities	88.2%	15
To provide hands off direction for the employee	29.4%	5
To provide the employee with boundaries	52.9%	9
To help eliminate the need for discipline	23.5%	4
To provide conflict resolution within the department	17.6%	3
To help the employee succeed within your department	58.8%	10
<i>answered question</i>		<b>17</b>

## Question 12

How would you best describe your fire department?		
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Full Time	0.0%	0
Part Time	0.0%	0
Combination	100.0%	18
Volunteer	0.0%	0
<i>answered question</i>		<b>18</b>
<i>skipped question</i>		<b>0</b>

## Question 13

What size population does your department serve?		
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Less than 10,000	0.0%	0
10,001 to 25,000	100.0%	18
25,001 to 50,000	0.0%	0
Greater than 50,000	0.0%	0
<i>answered question</i>		<b>18</b>
<i>skipped question</i>		<b>0</b>

## Question 14

How many years have you been in the fire service?		
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Less than 5 years	0.0%	0
6 to 10 years	5.6%	1
11 to 15 years	5.6%	1
16 to 20 years	5.6%	1
21 to 25 years	27.8%	5
Greater than 25 years	55.6%	10
<i>answered question</i>		<b>18</b>
<i>skipped question</i>		<b>0</b>

## Question 15

What rank do you currently hold in your fire department?		
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Chief	61.1%	11
Chief Grade Officer	27.8%	5
Captain	5.6%	1
Lieutenant	5.6%	1
Firefighter	0.0%	0
Administration	0.0%	0
Other	0.0%	0
<i>answered question</i>		<b>18</b>
<i>skipped question</i>		<b>0</b>

