

Preliminary Findings and Recommendations

Staffing and Retention in Public Safety Communications Centers

Know your numbers and build a case for appropriate staffing levels.

- Over 80% of managers reported an increase in the workload since 2000: they reported an increase in total call volume, an increase in wireless call volume, and an increase in the number of calls that resulted in dispatch to the scene.
- However, authorized staffing levels have not increased in most agencies: 31% of the managers indicated the number of authorized staff had increased, 62% said the number of authorized staff had remained about the same since 2000.
- Both employee satisfaction and retention rates were higher when a center was currently staffed at a level that allowed staff to “comfortably handle the workload.”
- Both employee satisfaction and retention rates were higher when employees worked less overtime, and overtime was voluntary rather than mandatory.

Monitor your agency's retention rate. Retention rates were higher when:

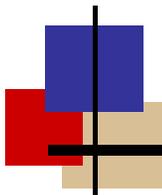
- Employee satisfaction was high.
- Employees felt there was an effective screening and application process, an effective training process, and they were satisfied with the shift selection process.
- Employees felt the training process prepared them to be effective in their jobs.
- Employees rated the overall performance of the agency high on items such as call answering times, ability to train, customer satisfaction, use of overtime, shift management, etc..
- Employees earned more, and were satisfied with their salary/earnings.

Pay attention to employee satisfaction. Satisfaction ratings were higher when:

- The number of benefits provided for employees was higher.
- Employees felt there was an effective screening and application process, an effective training process, and they were satisfied with the shift selection process.
- Employees felt their work was appreciated by coworkers, supervisors, management, sworn officers/officials, agencies they serve, public and/or elected officials, the media, the public and their partners/family members.

The complete PowerPoint presentation will be available soon at <http://www.apcointl.org/about/911/retains/>

Look for the complete report later this year.



APCO Project RETAINS
University of Denver Research Institute
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Research Notes

The instruments: There were two survey instruments: A survey for managers (66 question categories, 280 items) and one for employees (53 question categories, 325 items). Agencies received an initial invitation to participate in the study with a URL and instructions for how they and their staff could participate in the study. Print surveys were mailed to non-responders.

The sample: A random sample of 763 agencies was drawn from an agency contact database of almost 8,000 public safety communications centers provided by Intrado, Inc.

The process:

- **Instrument development and validity was based on “best practices”** identified and articulated by the APCO Staffing Crisis Task Force (2001). Draft questions were developed based on the recommendations of the APCO Staffing Crisis Task Force (2001). The questions were reviewed, revised and selected for inclusion in the two surveys by the members of the APCO Project RETAINS Committee. They were piloted at the Northwest Regional Conference in Spokane (2004), revised and piloted again on the web with people on the Project RETAINS interest list. A total of 79 managers and 199 employees were involved in the piloting process.
- **Data collection** spanned a twelve week period. We received responses from 153 managers and 600 employees; 186 agencies were represented, resulting in an overall agency response rate of 24%.
- **Data analyses** included use of basic descriptive statistics, analysis of variance, Chi-square and t-tests, correlation and regression analyses of the relationship between agency characteristics and practices (the independent variables), and agency retention rates and employee satisfaction (the two dependent variables). The data were subjected to: a power analysis (.90 indicated a sufficiently large sample); internal reliability analyses (all in excess of .70 indicated good internal consistency); an agency level discrepancy analysis (looked at discrepancy between manager and employee responses); internal consistency checks (participants provided similar responses to similar questions); a bias study (to see if agencies that did respond were significantly different from non-responding agencies); and a 95% confidence level (results were not considered statistically significant unless there was a 95% likelihood that the results were not due to chance).
 - **Retention and turnover were calculated based on managers reports** of the total number of employees working in the communication center and the total number of employees who had left the center during the previous year. Turnover = the number that left last year divided by the total number of employees. Retention = One minus the number that left last year divided by the total number of employees.
 - **Employee satisfaction was based on employee responses** to 52 items that asked employees to indicate their level of agreement (from strongly agree to strongly disagree) with statements about: the work itself, the physical environment, supervision and management, the level of support provided by the agency, the preparation and training provided, scheduling policies and practices, and compensation and benefits. A composite score, the Employee Satisfaction Index (ESI), was calculated for each employee.
- **Presenting the findings:** Preliminary data presented at APCO Annual Conference in Montreal (August 11, 2004). The presentation will be made available on the APCO website. A full research report and an effective practices guide will be released at a future date.