

NENIA
Ignite



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PSAP Staffing Plans: How Many People Do I Really Need?

Purpose

This session is focused on discussion and insight on the topics germane to the staffing struggles suffered in every Emergency Communications Center/Public Safety Answering (ECC/PSAP) Point across the country.

AGENDA

- **Currently available methods and tools**
- **Recognition and impact of trends**
- **Increasing retention and reducing attrition**
- **Sharing of successful short- and long-term solutions**
- **Budgets vs. investments**
- **Controlling the overtime monster**
- **The positive impact of staff development**
- **Resources to attract and retain talented candidates**
- **Out-of-the-box solutions**

CURRENT AVAILABLE TOOLS

- **Calculating Call taking Positions and Number of Call Takers**
- **APCO Project RETAINS**
- **NENA Staffing Guidelines and Worksheet**
- **NENA Human Resources List**
- **Erlang-C**
- **Determining Dispatcher Positions and Number of Dispatchers**
- **No formula**
- **How many channels/talkgroups must be monitored?**
- **Traffic load and threshold for combining channels/talkgroups**

TYPICAL VS. ATYPICAL



• **TYPICAL STEPS:**

- Establish service levels
- Collect data
- Project call volume
- ***Calculate number of call takers (and guess how many dispatchers are needed)***
- Determine system resources, e.g. positions
- Develop roster and schedule
- Calculate cost

• **ATYPICAL STEPS:**

- Establish service levels for call taking and dispatching, what about other duties?
- Collect data on all workload, include dispatching and other duties
- ***Project overall workload based on calls, dispatches, CAD events, other duties, leave, training, community service***
- Determine system resources, e.g. current, future and backup
- Develop roster and schedule, get creative, enlist and empower staff
- Calculate cost to reach and exceed service level

RECOGNITION AND IMPACT OF TRENDS

We're all dealing with staffing shortages

Competition

- Urban or higher paying PSAPs attracting trained staff
- Other types of employers that offer better pay and benefits packages
- Other types of employers that offer better hours, less stressful work environment

Economy

Time of year or seasonal impacts

Generational impacts

Connection to current cultural and societal impacts

Your hiring pool

INCREASING RETENTION – DECREASING ATTRITION

Do you know what your turnover rate is?

Why do people leave?

- Pay, benefits, no incentive to stay
- No future, no career path
- Conflict with management (Note: Not the agency or locality, but their boss)
- Work is hard, stressful, much of it is unrewarding, soul-stealing

INCREASING RETENTION – DECREASING ATTRITION



What can you do about it?

Improve qualification during hiring; are you asking questions like:

- **Why do they want this *specific* job?**
- **Why are they *leaving* their current job?**
- **Ask how they *resolved* a real-life conflict**
- **What do they *expect* from this job?**
- **Pay close *attention* to the answers**



Work to improve pay and benefits locally and be active in legislative changes

Include and/or share information with staff about these efforts – bring them to the fight

INCREASING RETENTION – DECREASING ATTRITION



What motivates your individual employees?

Talk about career paths available to them in and outside of your agency

Recognition and reward goes a long way

Personality tests may be a fun way to let them learn about themselves, and provides valuable information to you



What else can you do about it?

Know your direct supervisory staffs' management styles

Education and development of management staff is crucial to the overall well-being of your staff

If an employee is unhappy, check first for conflict with management

SHORT – AND LONG-TERM SOLUTIONS

- **As experienced in variably sized PSAPs across the country:**
 - **Guilford-Metro Greensboro NC - Multi-year plan**
 - **Charleston County SC - Consolidation driven**
 - **Seattle WA - Modernization and reconfiguring workflow and scheduling**
 - **New Orleans LA - Post-Katrina forced changes**

SHORT- AND LONG-TERM SOLUTIONS



• SHORT-TERM SOLUTIONS

- Streamline hiring and onboarding processes
- Enlisting part-time from pool of recently retired, other public safety or similar agencies, neighboring PSAPs
- Develop a temporary overtime schedule and stick to it, avoid burn out
- ***Shift extraneous workload elsewhere, like non-emergency calls and records functions***

• LONG-TERM SOLUTIONS

- Job fairs and recruitment planning
- Community College partnerships
- ***Invest***
 - ***In training program overhaul***
 - ***In staff development***
- Social media engagement
- Define and promote career path opportunities

BUDGETS VS. INVESTMENTS

- **The positive and negative impacts of \$\$\$\$**
 - Educate or remind decision-makers about correlation between service levels and incentives, e.g. productivity, QoS, pay, benefits, recognition and career paths
 - Public service is what local government does. Improving public service requires commitment via long-term investments
 - Improving staffing numbers, quality of service (QoS) and retention is a public service improvement that requires long-term commitment
 - Existing funding streams such as 9-1-1 surcharges and grants are to be leveraged, not relied on as all-encompassing

CONTROLLING THE OVERTIME MONSTER

- **Destructive Cycle Begins:**
 - **Employees are tired, becoming ill; taking more mental health days; absenteeism upsurges – all leading to more overtime and loss of productivity and decreased service levels**
- **Taming the Monster:**
 - **Know your OT limits. No limits? Make limits. Work with HR to install limits**
 - **More tightly control OT worked on the overnight shifts**
 - **Try to focus/limit OT to days off, no double shifts; don't allow holdover after 12-hour shifts**
 - **If 80% of OT is filled by 20% of staff, then you have a problem**
 - **Beware of fatigue errors**
 - **Cross-training**
 - **Adapt schedule to workload peaks and lows**

IMPACT OF STAFF DEVELOPMENT



Impact of Development:

Career path development is the most effective way to lessen attrition

Opportunities, challenges and growth within the organization *equals* retention and QoS improvements

Do you have a retention strategy that includes training? With the opportunity to add skills and responsibilities?

Specialization vs. generalization – training to a specific task will make the employees less attracted to or by competing PSAPs



Impact of Status Quo/No Development:

Continued/increased costs of recruitment and selection

Decreased QoS

Low morale

RESOURCES TO ATTRACT AND RETAIN TALENT:

- Expand your recruiting area; Hire local and from across the country (case study: Seattle); Hire marketing and headhunters; engage local media outlets
- Combat boredom and stress with rotating duties; Provide opportunities to contribute
- Community involvement
- Encourage employees to recruit via word of mouth, job fairs
- Partner with community colleges; Assist in developing curriculum
- Pay and benefits must be competitive for your area

OUT OF THE BOX SOLUTIONS:

- Partner with high schools and colleges – counselors and placement
- Reach out to career development centers, include veteran placement
- Engage local media
- Use social media (wisely)
- Advertise using real success stories
- Appeal to the right ‘type’ of recruits
- Promote job fairs as an event; marketing and hiring incentives



DISCUSSION AND QUESTIONS

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SEPTEMBER 22 - 24 2020