

League of California Cities



Diversity, Equity & Inclusivity in the Fire Service:
Navigating and Implementing Strategies for Chiefs

Presenter

Mike Despain



37 Years of service
Multiple agencies
Many internal investigations
Many lessons learned!

Presenter

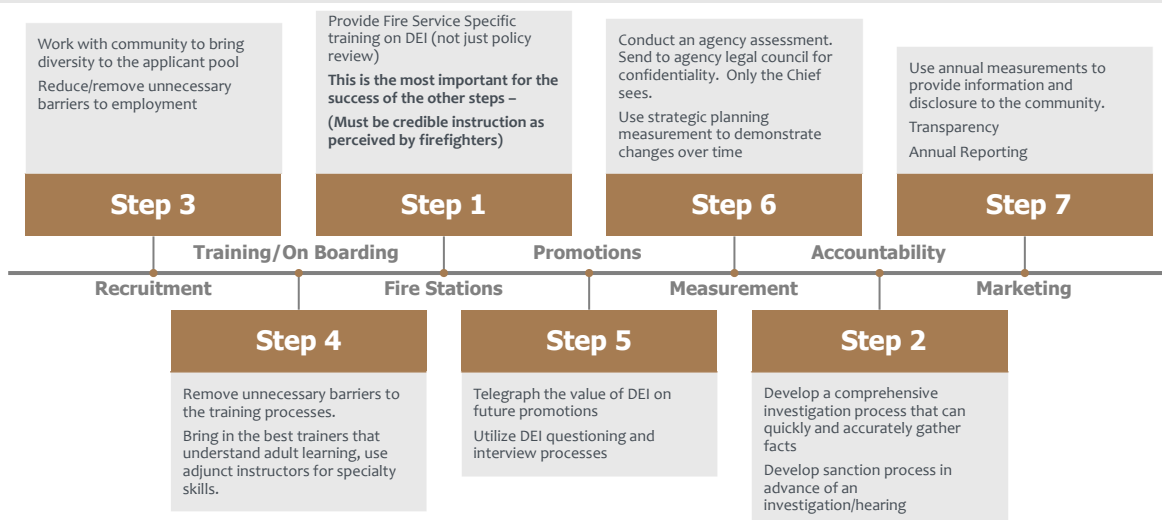
Eric Rosoff



31 years of service
15+ years FD research
100+ agency-wide trainings
Many lessons learned!

Fire Service DEI Improvement Model

Strategies for improving Diversity, Equity and Inclusivity within the fire service



Step 1

Provide Fire Service Specific DEI Training

- This is one of the most important steps and needs to be done early in your process otherwise it diminishes the effectiveness of the other steps
- Don't rely solely on "online" training
- Training must be provided by "credible" instructors as perceived by the audience
- Training must capture and keep the attention of the audience, then make an emotional impact so as to stay with them
 - Humor, provocative stories, emotionally impactful close

Step 2

Accountability

- Need a comprehensive investigation process
 - Must quickly and accurately gather facts
 - What do you do with the accuser and accused?
 - Consider outsourcing
- Develop your disciplinary/sanction process in advance
- Remember, the agency needs to execute flawlessly once an accusation has been made

Step 3

Recruitment

- Work with the community to bring diversity to the applicant pool
- Remove unnecessary barriers to entry
 - Physical ability testing
 - Candidate sometimes are required to pay for testing
 - Provide "day in the life" type training experiences for prospective applicants
 - Fire Explorer programs

Step 4

Training/On Boarding

- Assign your best trainers to the training process
 - Must understand adult learning
 - Prohibit the "Drill Sargent" routine
 - Set clear expectations for instructors
- Remove unnecessary barriers to entry
 - Academy is the safest place to make mistakes
 - Is about getting the candidates through the process, not "survival of the fittest"
 - Candidates should feel like they are part of a team, and the team will work hard to help them

Step 5

Telegraph the value of DEI for future promotions

- Let aspiring leaders know the importance of “people skills” over the traditional over-emphasis on “operational skills” in future promotional processes
- Utilize DEI topics in testing processes
 - Pre-reading/study assignments
 - Questions during the process

Step 6

DEI Measurement

- Conduct an agency assessment
 - Use a qualified assessor
 - The report can be sent to legal counsel for confidentiality (initially)
- Implement DEI measurements in the agency’s Strategic Planning processes
 - Track changes over time

Step 7

Marketing

- Use annual measurements to provide information and transparency to the community
 - Celebrate successes
 - Disclose gaps
 - Engage community leaders
- Its all about maintaining public trust

Meaningful Workplace Training – Ops vs Admin

“Move the needle!”



These events are dangerous!

No “harmless” risks - carcinogens

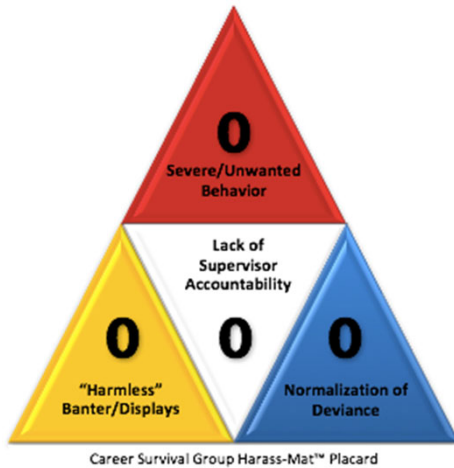
Aggregate exposure

Big events require outside resources

Mitigation, training & placard.

Meaningful Workplace Training – Ops vs Admin

“Harass-Mat” Harassment/Hostile work environment avoidance training



These events are dangerous!

No “harmless” risks - **carcinogens**

Aggregate exposure

Big events require outside resources

Mitigation, training & placard

Meaningful Workplace Training – Ops vs Admin

“Harass-Mat” Placard / Scale



0 Not Occurring

1 Occasionally occurs
Quickly corrected.

2 Occasionally occurs
Rarely corrected.

3 Regularly occurs
Rarely or never corrected.

Meaningful Workplace Training – Ops vs Admin

“Harass-Mat” Placard / Scale



0-2

Professional work environment.

3-5

Arguably a hostile work environment.

6-12

Hostile work environment.

Meaningful Workplace Training – Ops vs Admin

Train at crew level – focus on Company Officers



Company Officers are expected to put out small fires

Authority

Training

Tools

Resources

Meaningful Workplace Training – Ops vs Admin

Policy counts!! Focus on the issues, not the theories



“Petty slights, annoyances, and isolated incidents do NOT rise to the level of harassment”

These are small fires

PUT THEM OUT

Meaningful Workplace Training – Ops vs Admin

Policy counts!! Focus on the issues, not the theories



Conduct becomes unlawful when it is a condition of employment, and

Severe

Unwanted

OR

Meaningful Workplace Training – Ops vs Admin

Policy counts!! Focus on the issues, not the theories



PERVASIVE

A reasonable person would consider the behavior intimidating, hostile, or abusive

How fast can a station go from “happy” to “hostile?”

Meaningful Workplace Training – Ops vs Admin

Hostile work environments develop over time “Admin carcinogens”



PERVASIVE

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Meaningful Workplace Training – Ops vs Admin

Company Officers



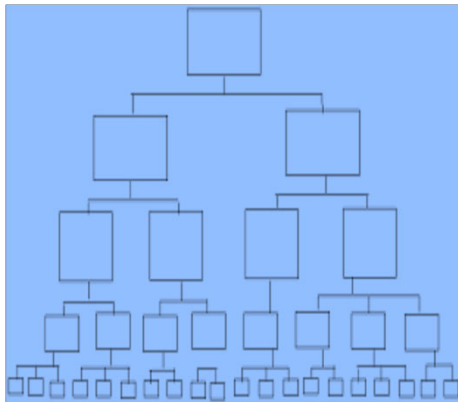
Most challenging admin job in the country!

Agency only as strong as weakest CO

Both operationally & administratively

Meaningful Workplace Training – Ops vs Admin

Company Officers



Chief – Where we're going

Chief Ofc's – How we get there

Rank & File – Tires on the bus

Company Officers
DRIVING THE BUS!

Meaningful Workplace Training – Ops vs Admin

Company Officers



Your family is on the bus

Their safety is in your hands

Pay attention

Meaningful Workplace Training – Ops vs Admin

Company Officers



Your family is on the bus

Their safety is in your hands

Pay attention

**Cultural Change One Crew
and One Shift at a Time**

League of California Cities

Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion



Fire Chiefs

Leadership SEMINAR

Universal City, CA