

**The Bill Blackwood
Law enforcement Management Institute of Texas**

Management and Employee Retention

**An Administrative Research Paper
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ABSTRACT

Historically, employees stayed with a company until they retired. However, in this day and age, this is no longer the norm and this change in employee behavior is of critical importance for law enforcement agencies. A law enforcement professional will not necessarily remain with the same agency he or she began his or her career with. Thus, the primary purpose of this research is to determine the root causes of an employee leaving an agency prematurely or retiring early. A secondary research issue questions whether or not management actions have any relation, be it positive or negative, on employee retention, and if so to what degree and why.

The author's research includes a review of text books, professional journals, published articles, law enforcement and business related websites, as well as a survey. The findings of this author demonstrate that there is a link between the management of a law enforcement agency (by being fair and equitable in their decisions, showing support, being aware of what's going on in the department, and maintaining accountability within the organization) and employee retention. In conclusion, the morale of a law enforcement agency and employee retention run parallel to one another and an organization that strives and achieves high morale will be successful in retaining their employees.

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INTRODUCTION

Historically, employees stayed with a company until they retired. Loyalty between the employer and employee was very strong. Unfortunately, times have changed. Law enforcement agencies are the last bastion of the twenty year pension. While other businesses have developed 401K programs with their movable retirement accounts, the majority of police agencies still require twenty years for a basic pension. Therefore, in light of this change in how employees look at their relationship with their employer, what is it that law enforcement managers need to be aware of in their dealings with employees so as not to have employees leaving or retiring early.

In the past, law enforcement agencies were thought to be invincible for keeping good employees and this has currently proven to be untrue. With changes in the economy and employee work behavior agencies from around the country have been affected. Tight budgets, increases in the cost of living, and a poor economy have put a strain everywhere in America. Downsizing, including supervisory positions, has become a daily reality for smaller agencies. This limits possible upward movement, which is a cause of officers looking elsewhere for agencies that can offer advancement.

The impact of losing qualified officers is phenomenal. The cost of recruiting and training new officers is very time consuming, and costly. To hire a new employee with no law enforcement experience and send that person to a regional basic police academy costs an agency quite a bit and does not guarantee that the person will stay with that particular agency for any amount of time.

Through the author's research of journals, published articles, websites and a survey, the findings of this research will demonstrate how management and employee retention correlate with one another. The importance of this research is beneficial to a

law enforcement agency's ability to retain qualified personnel and increase employee retention. This would benefit the police agency themselves and the community they are sworn to serve and protect.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

There are many myths about employee retention. Contrary to public belief that money is everything, this is not always the case. Some believe providing too much training will not prove to be beneficial to the agency. Once again this is a falsehood. Employees who are offered training not only satisfies their internal needs for intellectual stimulation, but instills a sense of loyalty with the agency. However, the impact of resignations is always taken lightly by the employers.

Having a person leave can be a learning experience for the company. Much information can be gained through the use of exit interviews, as well as giving internal insight as to the well-being of employees. If there is a mass exodus, this should set off a red light for management, from the chief executive, to the city administrators. Often, an excessively high turnover rate compared to the industry standard is synonymous of problems within the organization (Gomez-Mejia, Balkin, & Cardy 1998).

Why do employees leave their employers? There are a multitude of reasons. Job satisfaction is a primary reason. Job satisfaction incorporates a wide variety of things. The lack of opportunities or upward movement to supervisory positions proves to be discouraging for some employees. Excessive turnover may have dire consequences, which may jeopardize the agencies objectives.

Through excessive turnover, the agency will end up with insufficiently qualified personnel. Excessive turnover is driven by the end result of poor leadership.

Organizations cause excessive turnover rates due to managerial incompetence, poor judgment, poor communication skills, and lack of foresight. According to Abassi (2000), managers with myopic vision experience excessive employee turnover and may end up with an insufficient number of qualified people. Overall, organizations fail because of poor management, which inevitably causes excessive employee turnover within the agency. A study conducted by the Saratoga Institute reveals that 89% of managers believed that employees leave for more money, when in fact, the survey reveals that 88% of the employees leave for reasons other than money.

According to Branham (2005), the ten most frequently mentioned areas that employees say companies fail in are: poor management, lack of career growth and advancement opportunities, poor communications, inadequate pay, lack of recognition, poor senior leadership, lack of training, excessive workload, lack of tools and resources, and lack of teamwork. It is easier for managers to say money is the issue, instead of addressing problems that are in need of repair because this shifts blame from management. Steps can be taken to keep employees happy and productive, which would help reduce the possibilities of them quitting their job because of job dissatisfaction.

There are many ways to retain the employees. Ensuring a marketable rate of pay is essential. Also, stimulating your employees by providing quality training opportunities has shown to improve employee satisfaction. Training has proven to be a number one retention tool by companies (Bailey, 1998). This not only improves job satisfaction, but gives the employer well-trained employees and it engages the employee to be part of the organization. Another key factor regarding why people stay in the organization is

their leaders. Sadly, organization leaders are also the reason given as to why employees leave an organization.

Kouzes & Posner (2003) explain that when asked, employees ranked *interesting work* well above *high income*, and the quality of leadership, was more motivating than money. When there is a cause for work and a clear picture of what the employee is and will be accomplishing, individuals become committed to the organizations they work for. People normally don't quit their companies, they quit their bosses. Ensuring that workplace toxicity is removed and the quality of life in the workplace is enhanced also has been shown to increase employee retention. Weak leadership also plays a critical issue on morale which goes hand in hand with employee retention. A happy employee is a loyal employee.

Weak leadership generally results in organizational deterioration, which in turn results in the premature departure of valued employees, either through changing of employers or if eligible, early retirement. People are normally proud to be a part of organizations, but tend to look elsewhere for employment if not happy with the current situation (Bushey, 2000). Increasing the morale of the agency will ultimately increase the retention rate. The benefits of increased morale lead to less citizen complaints, internal grievances, reduced employee turnover and increased productivity (Trautman, 1997).

Employees want a feeling of belonging and their decision to stay or leave depends on the work environment. (Abassi, 2000). Another way for the employer to improve employee morale is through a mentoring program. The employee gets a sense that they belong to the organization and can make a difference. The modern mentoring program is being used to effectively recruit and retain new employees by giving the

employers an opportunity to engage and anchor new employees when hiring competition is at an all time high. The mentoring relationship goal is to promote professional growth, inspire professional motivation and enhance effective in service training, (Spafka & Kranda, 2000).

When considering mentoring benefits for mentors: mentors are personally rewarded for spotlighting and developing talent, mentors must be knowledgeable of departmental policies, procedures, and contemporary policing practices, mentors pave the way for others thereby leaving their legacy in their agency, mentors are viewed as valuable assets in the organization and are respected by their colleagues, and mentors obtain varying perspectives from their protégés, which generate creativity, and mentors “get by giving.”

Mentoring benefits for protégés increases the likelihood for success, assists in setting goals and charting career paths, encourages and provides opportunities for new experiences and professional growth, and finally, helps avoid pitfalls and enhances learning through real life examples. In addition, mentoring enhances feelings and worth to the mentor and organization and encourages self-confidence by cheering their achievements (Spafka & Kranda, 2000).

The mentoring program is a win-win situation not only for the employers, but for the employees themselves. The program provides a great source of employee retention, not only to the newer employee, but to the senior employee as well.

METHODOLOGY

Throughout this writing, the author has shown where management interactions with the employees directly affect employee retention. The goal of this research addresses the issue regarding whether or not management actions have any relation to

employee retention and if so, how much, and why?. To determine the answers to these questions, the author has extensively researched journals, published articles and various websites that address the retention issue and its root causes.

During Module II of this course, the author discussed retention issues with fellow students on several occasions. These discussions reinforced many of the ideas found in published articles and websites that addressed poor retention and their causal factors. The research indicates that there were overwhelming similarities throughout various law enforcement agencies at all levels of management. The author has incorporated these conveyances into the findings section of this paper.

This author will also conduct a detailed search for compatible surveys that have been used to gauge the climate surrounding poor retention. The author found that there are many surveys and analyzed results that corroborate the findings from the survey. Without finding a survey that exactly matched the author's needs, an existing survey was altered and implemented.

Through the use of a questionnaire survey, the author's findings will show how management directly impacts morale, which subsequently affects the level of employee retention within a company. The base survey will be taken from the National Ethics Institute, by Trautman (1997) and several questions will be added to the base survey that are specifically designed to fit the purpose of this research.

The survey, (Appendix A), will be distributed to various law enforcement agencies within Texas with a return date resulted in the following: of the 70 surveys that were sent out a total of 38 responses were returned.

FINDINGS

The author's research will show how management and employee retention correlate with one another. The morale and quality of life in the workplace plays a significant role in retaining employees. In the survey that was conducted for this writing, as stated previously in this writing, people normally don't quit their companies, they quit their bosses (Kouzes & Posner, 2003). Employees only want equality and fairness in the workplace, and when this is done, employee retention improves. There are several reasons employee morale declines within an organization.

Perception plays a great part of the quality of life in the workplace. If employees perceive that they are being treated unequally, or unfairly, then morale starts to decline. When employees feel that management is playing favoritism towards certain groups or individuals, this tends to negatively affect their morale.

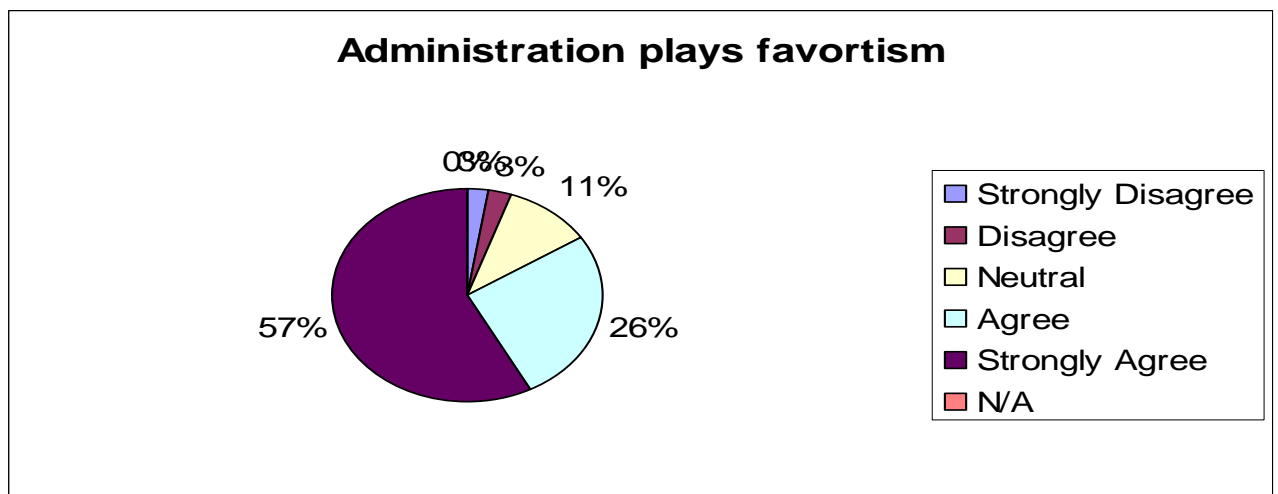


Figure 1

In the eyes of the employee, because management is removed from working in the “trenches” with them, they tend to feel that management is out of touch (Figure 2). Therefore, the employees may tend to feel that decisions when made, and are adverse

to them regardless of the merit of the decision, was made because management “does not understand”. The remedy to this is the style of management known as “Management by Wandering Around.” Simply stated, the manager comes down from the “ivory tower,” e.g. his or her office, and interacts with his or her employees at the employees’ level. In this way not only would the manger get a better feel of the agency, but it may assist in improving morale.

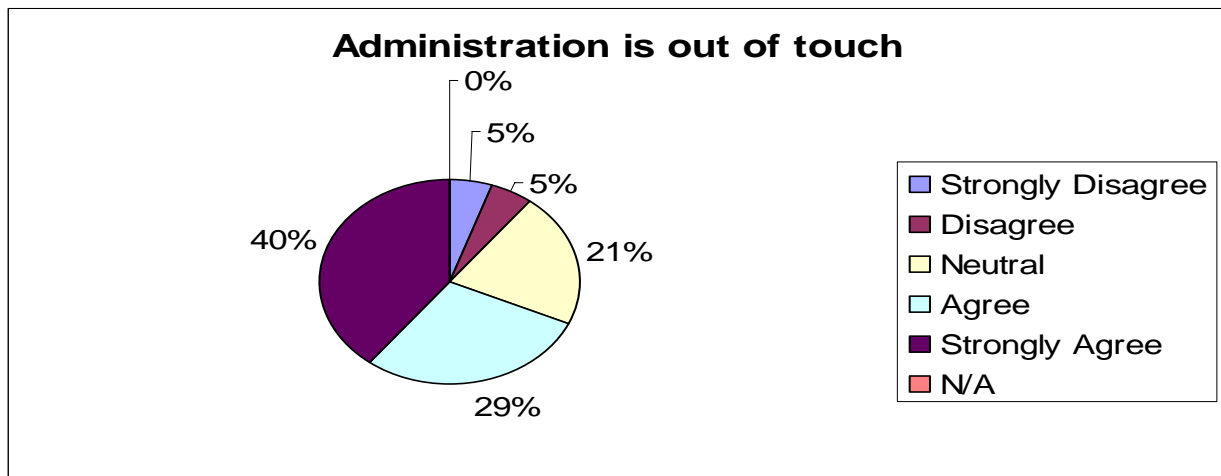


Figure 2

Many times decisions are made by management, which employees tend to resent. Many times the decisions are based on the overall needs of that particular agency, not the employees. This tends to build animosity between the employees and management, which starts the declination of morale. The employees get a sense that management does not support them. Although the employee may not initially agree, depending on the decision, an explanation to the employee would help the employee to understand better. Effective communication would be beneficial.

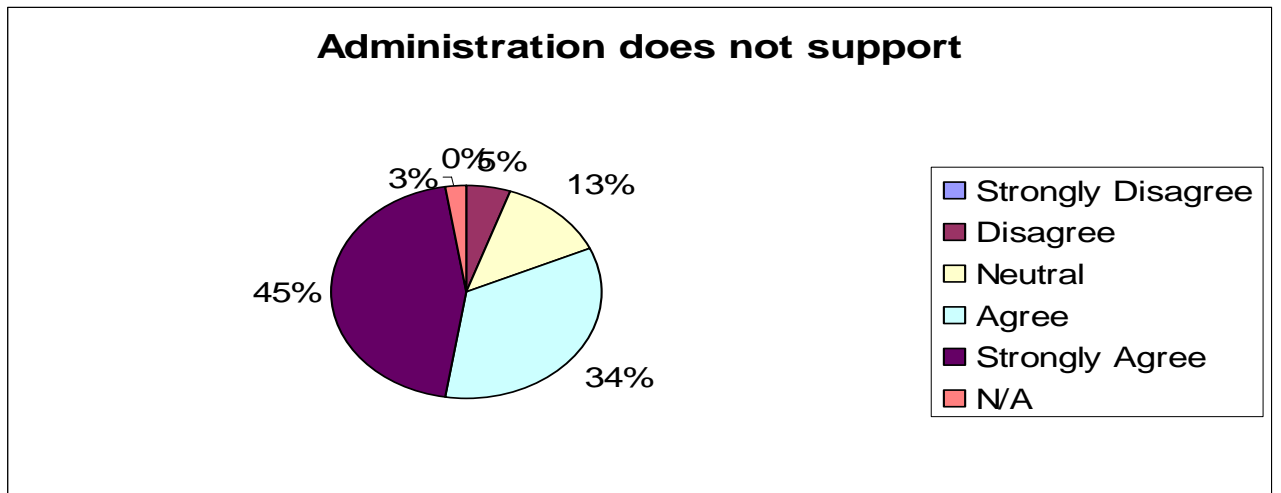


Figure 3

Although no one wants to be punished, there should be accountability in the workplace. When management administers discipline, it must be swift, fair, and equal across the board. By being fair, equitable, and maintaining accountability, employees know what is expected of them.

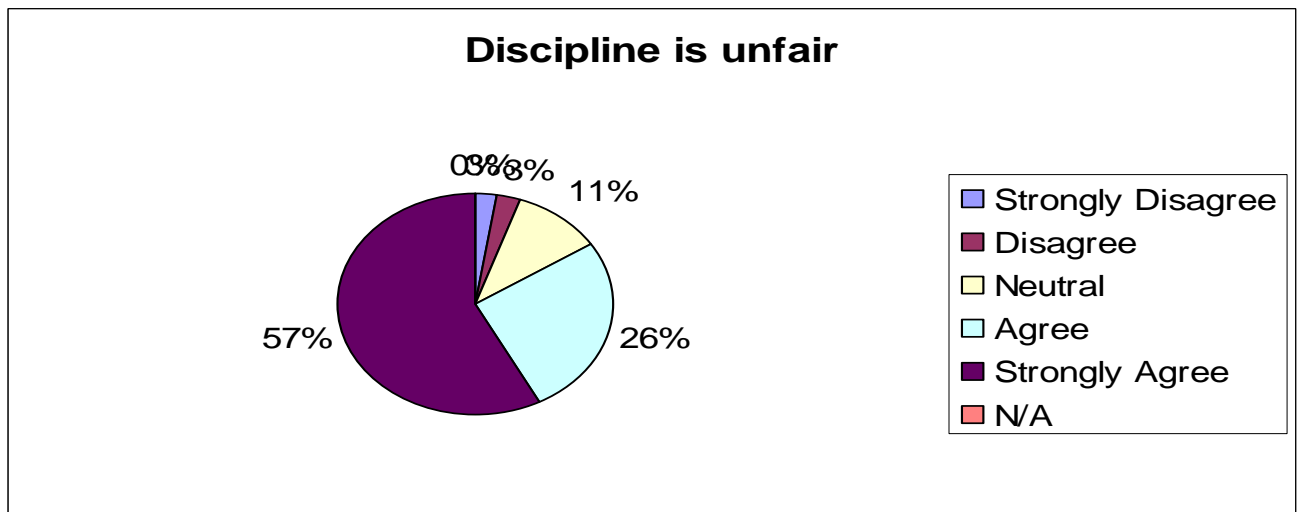


Figure 4

Strategies for retaining your employees entail many activities. Ensuring they are paid according to market surveys is important. Stimulating your employees by providing training opportunities has shown to improve employee satisfaction, as well. Mentoring programs have proven to create a sense of belonging to the new employee. While at the same time giving the mentoring employee a feeling of self-worth and a sense of value to the organization. In addition, the program helps orientate the individual to the new environment, helps facilitate career progressions, enhances communications, and boost morale. As show by the graph below, only 1% did not identify a benefit from having a mentor. When establishing a mentorship, it's important that it's a two way street. The employee needs to be encouraged to use their mentor to produce a satisfying relationship (Whelton & Cameron, 2002).

Figure 3. Benefits of Having a Mentor.

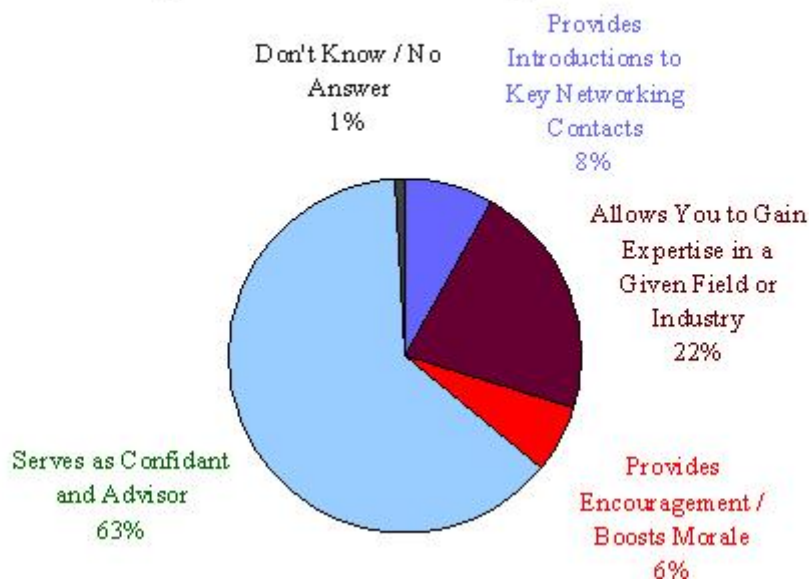


Figure 5

DISCUSSION/CONCLUSIONS

The goal of this research poses the question “Do management actions have any relation to employee retention?” and if so, “How much, and why?” The purpose of this research was to determine “Does management have any impact on employee retention?” Through the author’s research, it was found that less turnover and employee satisfaction can be a result of effective management. Management sets the tone and directs the future for the agency. Ineffective or weak leadership coupled with poor management results in deterioration within the organization, which ultimately affects the retention of valued employees.

Based on the findings, through the use of a survey, and research material, the author was able to support and show the correlation between management, morale, quality way of life at work, and employee retention.

During the author’s research process a significant amount of information was easily obtained on the subject matter presented here. However, it is noted that the research was hindered slightly by the low number of returned surveys, (38 out of 70).

In order to increase employee retention within an organization, management should be more cognizant to the level of morale within their agency. As demonstrated in this research, employee retention can be done in a variety of ways such as: being fair and equitable, staying in touch, showing support, and maintaining accountability within their organization.

It is relevant for agencies to practice these on a daily basis and in return should not have any problems keeping good employees. Morale and employee retention run

parallel with one and another, and an organization that strives, and achieves high morale will be highly successful in retaining their employees.

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APPENDIX/APPENDICES

Appendix A

The following survey was obtained from the National Ethics Institute.

Please review the following topics that may or may not affect the retention of personnel. Rate the topics on a 1 thru 5 scale (1 being that you strongly disagree, and 5 being that you strongly agree):

Administration plays favoritism

Strongly Disagree

☐ 1

☐ 2

☐ 3

☐ 4

☐ 5

Strongly Agree

☐ N/A

Staffing levels are low

Strongly Disagree

☐ 1

☐ 2

☐ 3

☐ 4

☐ 5

Strongly Agree

☐ N/A

Motivation and morale is bad

Strongly Disagree

☐ 1

☐ 2

☐ 3

☐ 4

☐ 5

Strongly Agree

☐ N/A

Communication is very poor

Strongly Disagree

☐ 1

☐ 2

☐ 3

☐ 4

☐ 5

Strongly Agree

☐ N/A

Administration is "out of touch"

Strongly Disagree

☐ 1

☐ 2

☐ 3

☐ 4

☐ 5

Strongly Agree

☐ N/A

Administration does not support us

Strongly Disagree

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

Strongly Agree

☐ N/A

Discipline is unfair and inconsistent

Strongly Disagree

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

Strongly Agree

☐ N/A

Fellow employees have bad attitudes

Strongly Disagree

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

Strongly Agree

☐ N/A

Accountability is unfair and inconsistent

Strongly Disagree

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

Strongly Agree

☐ N/A

Supervisors play politics

Strongly Disagree

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

Strongly Agree

☐ N/A

Employees aren't listened to

Strongly Disagree

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

Strongly Agree

☐ N/A

Criminal Justice system is frustrating

Strongly Disagree

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

Strongly Agree

☐ N/A

Bias influences leader's decisions

Strongly Disagree

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

Strongly Agree

☐ N/A

Sincere recognition given by the Administration

Strongly Disagree

Strongly Agree

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5 ☐ N/A

Training is poor or inconsistent

Strongly Disagree

Strongly Agree

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5 ☐ N/A

Respect isn't demonstrated

Strongly Disagree

Strongly Agree

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5 ☐ N/A

Teamwork/Comrade is pitiful

Strongly Disagree

Strongly Agree

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5 ☐ N/A

Planning is non-existent

Strongly Disagree

Strongly Agree

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5 ☐ N/A

Salary is not high enough

Strongly Disagree

Strongly Agree

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5 ☐ N/A

Cooperation among co-workers is poor

Strongly Disagree

Strongly Agree

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5 ☐ N/A

Goals and objectives are never used

Strongly Disagree

Strongly Agree

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5 ☐ N/A

Equipment is inadequate

Strongly Disagree

Strongly Agree

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5 ☐ N/A

Please read the following questions, and check the appropriate box for your answer:

Do you know the stated goals and objectives of the agency you work for?

☐ Yes ☐ No

Do you feel that the Administration is supportive of the needs of the department?

☐ Yes ☐ No

Do you feel that the Administration is adequately recognizing employees?

☐ Yes ☐ No

Are you actively considering leaving your current agency?

☐ Yes ☐ No

If so, if you were asked to stay by your Administration, would you?

☐ Yes ☐ No

Comments: _____
