

Preparing for the storm on the horizon

Richard B. Gasaway
Gasaway Consulting Group
St. Paul, Minnesota
Rich@RichGasaway.com

The current state of affairs...

- World economy
- Stock market
- State government
- Local government
- Employment.

How are citizens feeling?

- Afraid
- Angry
- Desperate
- Anxious
- Vulnerable
- Betrayed

What is the public
perception of a
firefighter?

Rational perceptions
v.
Emotional perceptions

In regards to us:

Passionate leadership = good

Emotional leadership = bad

Leadership is
about influence

Trust

Relationships

Communications

Survey says...

- Largest spending cuts in 25 year history of the survey.
- 87% financial officers reporting cities are worse off than in 2009.
- NLC president: “All the easy cuts are gone.”
- 25% of cities reportedly cutting back further on public safety.
- Making deeper cuts to those services usually reserved as “last resort.”

Challenges we are facing...

Escalating demands for non-fire services
drawing us away from our core mission

Challenges we are facing...

Mandates without money to effectively provide services.

Challenges we are facing...

Static, inefficient government systems

Challenges we are facing...

Pressure to accelerate use of technology to improve efficiency

Challenges we are facing...

Pressure for regional service delivery
and multi-jurisdictional problem solving

Challenges we are facing...

Revenue sources (taxation) is still based upon an old economy

Challenges we are facing...

Dealing with citizen distrust & their lack basic civic knowledge

The low hanging fruit has all been picked.

(The easy cuts have all been made.)

The time to be creative is upon us.

We are are going to be asked...

The answers we give...
will influence our direction.

How should we
be overseen?

Oversight

- Should we be a Department of public safety?
 - Consolidation of administrative functions
 - Budget
 - Policy development/administration
 - Personnel administration
 - Record keeping
 - ICMA Position?

How should our
performance be
measured?

Metrics

- How do we measure quality?
 - Average response times
 - Structural fire dollar loss
 - Separate out responses to “real” emergencies
 - Response stats (Code 11)
 - Track critical success metrics
- Fire loss = failure.

How should
we be staffed?

Staffing

- Are members time used efficiently?
 - Effective uses of staff time
 - Idle time is a source for criticism
 - Sleeping on the job. (In most professions, would get you fired.)
 - Schedules are not based on workload/demands. They are based on how the firefighters want to work.

How should we
use technology?

Technology...

- Compressed Air Foam Systems (CAFS)
- High pressure mist fire extinguishers
- Automated Vehicle Locator Systems (AVLS)
- Class A foam
- Sprinkler systems
- Fire interruption technology
- Thermal imagers
- Firefighting drones
- System status management.

How do we determine
our efficiency?

Efficiency...

- Is staffing and responses efficient?
 - Right sizing responses (staff & apparatus)
 - Routine vs. emergency responses
 - Use volunteer/part-time personnel
 - Work schedules based on workload
 - Shared resources/responses
 - Smaller (non-custom) response units.

Should our emphasis be
on suppression or
prevention of fires?

Suppression vs. prevention...

- Should the focus be on suppression or prevention?
 - Reactive vs. proactive
 - Expensive vs. low cost
 - Highly resource intensive vs. low resource usage
 - High personal risk vs. low personal risk
 - Expensive to train vs. low cost to train
 - Expensive to maintain vs. low cost to maintain.

Should we be in EMS?
And if so...
to what degree?

EMS...

- How should EMS be provided?
 - Private vs. public
 - Level of service (F/R, EMT, Paramedic)
 - Transport or no transport
 - Total out-of-service time (exposure)
 - Types of response vehicles
 - Number of responders on a call
 - Training level of responders
 - EMS as a revenue stream.

To answer these questions properly, requires:

- Establishing what citizen expectations are
- Understanding the community's ability/willingness to pay
- Realizing there are political forces/priorities in play
- Data that justifies needs (budget, staffing, equipment)

Responder safety/well-being

- As resources change, so must our mission, vision, goals and expectations.
- The way we do our jobs will be impacted.
- We need to engage in tough discussions and have good answers for the tough questions.
- We need to seek ways to cooperate as we may never have before.

These challenging times will change the services we provide and the way we provide them.

We need to be prepared for the tough questions on the horizon.

Richard B. Gasaway, PhD, EFO
St. Paul, Minnesota

www.SAMatters.com
www.RichGasaway.com
612-548-4424