

Keeping the Best! Meeting EMS Retention Challenges Head On

Pennsylvania EMS Conference
August 16, 2007

Keeping the Best! EMS Workforce Retention Tool Kit



Background

- 2004 JLARC Report – Review of EMS in VA (House Document No. 37)
- Reviewed how we had addressed leadership and retention issues in the past- one size fits all approach was not working.
- Hired a consultant (May 2004)
 - Objectivity and a fresh perspective
 - Apply business concepts to a complex problem
 - Allowed for intensive focus on problem

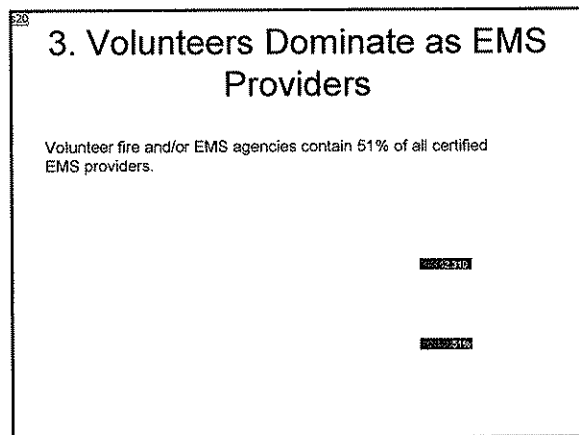
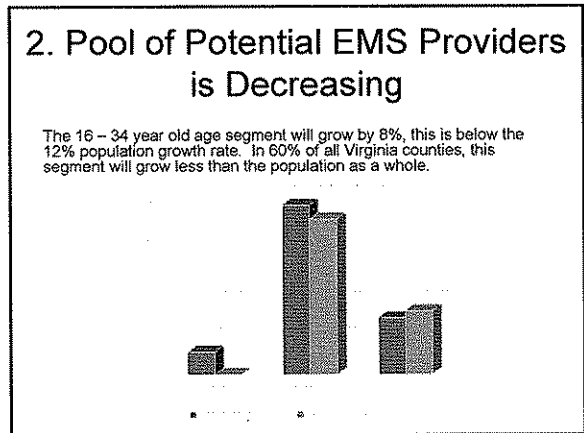
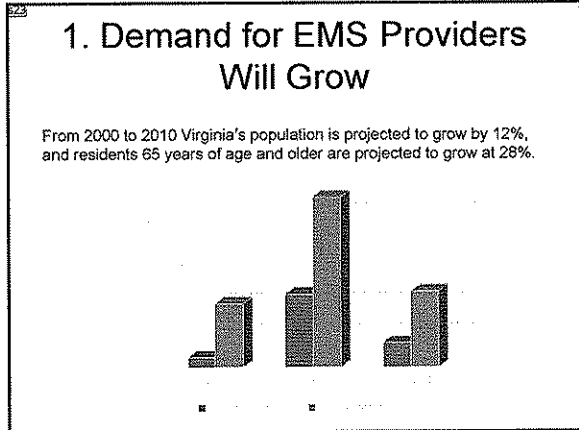
Keeping The Best!

Project Objectives:

- Develop strategies and identify solutions to enhance and improve the retention of volunteer and career EMS personnel in Virginia.
- Develop a “tool kit” comprised of four workbooks designed to be used by EMS leaders as part of the day-to-day operation of their agency.

Phase 1 - EMS Workforce Retention Research

- Contracted with Renaissance Resources, a Richmond based business consulting firm
- **Demographic research**
 - Office of Emergency Medical Services, Va. Dept. of Health Databases
 - Bureau of Labor Statistics
 - Census Bureau 2000 Data
 - Virginia Employment Commission
 - Recent Articles and Publications on Retention
- **Benchmarking**
 - 12 EMS leaders representing 39 volunteer agencies were interviewed to determine retention practices and approaches.
- **Focus Groups**
 - Three focus group meetings were held around Virginia to understand retention issues at all levels in an organization.



4. Less Time Available to Volunteer
- > Research indicates dual-worker families and families maintained by a single woman or man now dominate.
 - > Americans are working longer hours and have less ability to get time off from work to volunteer.
 - > 44.7% of those who volunteered in the U.S. in the past year listed *lack of time* as the reason for not volunteering.

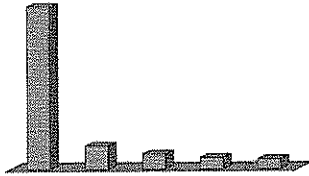
5. Increased Competition for Available Volunteers

The Bureau of Labor Statistics News 2003 release indicated that volunteers were involved in the following activities. Refer to the Corporation for National and Community Service Web site for national and state volunteer trends at www.nationalservice.org

6. EMS Turnover Rates are Not Well Tracked
- > Given that retention is a critical issue facing EMS agencies, it is surprising that more attention has not been placed on determining turnover.
 - > National estimates put it at between 16% - 25% for EMTs and 5% - 9% for Paramedics.
 - > Interviews with selected Virginia EMS agencies indicated that turnover averaged 19% for volunteers and 11% for career EMS personnel.

7. EMTs Dominate Certifications

EMTs account for 70% of all EMS certifications. The second largest category is Paramedics at 10%



8. Training is Both a Barrier to and an Enabler of Retention

Training as a Barrier:

- Studies report that the time and expense of training is a barrier to attracting and retaining EMS providers.
- Benchmark agencies report that, on average, seven months is required to prepare a volunteer to perform all aspects of their job.
- One study by the University of Illinois, 55% of rural EMS volunteers quit because of training requirements.

Training as an Enabler:

- Studies also report that training can be an enabler of retention.
- Benchmark agencies report training is a motivator if it is accessible and interesting.
- Training programs may need to be designed with offerings important to the EMS provider.

9. More Than One Program is Used to Address Retention

Retention Program	% Rated High
Addressing "honeymoon blues"	100%
Competency based pay	100%
Social functions	100%
New professional orientation	91%
Orientation Training	91%
Providing more advanced training	83%
Mentoring new professionals	82%
Using team based decision making	82%
Addressing job stress issues	80%
Integration into the "team" or "family".	80%
Mentoring core competency professionals	75%
Flexible Scheduling	73%
Publicity for outstanding performance	73%
Special pay or benefits	73%
Coaching and performance feedback	64%
Connecting job performance to agency success	57%
Grooming for leadership	54%
Balancing agency service with home responsibilities	38%

Findings From Benchmark EMS Agencies

The following practices were interwoven into their business and leadership practices:

- Provided high quality, easily accessible no or low cost training.
- Created and sustained a family and team feeling to the agency's culture.
- Are flexible in meeting EMS providers' needs.

Implication Summary

- The major implication for retention is that the gaps between supply and demand place more pressure on agencies to retain EMS providers longer.
- A second implication is that traditional methods of managing and responding to EMS providers' needs will likely be less effective in the future, especially with Generation X&Y. More flexible and innovate approaches must be tested to find the ones that work best for each EMS agency.

Recommendations

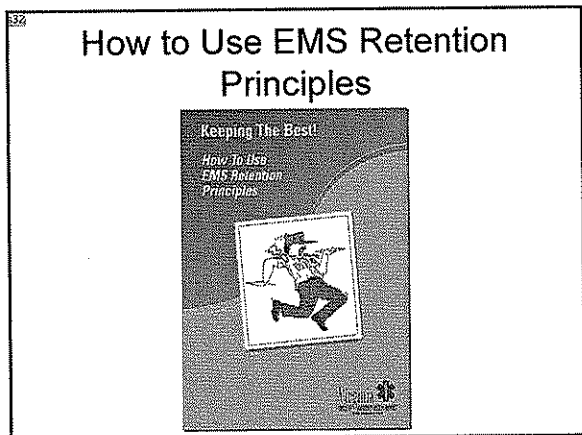
1. Identify unique EMS agency market segments to focus tool development.
2. Develop tools for the four market segments identified.

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Phase 2 – Development of Tools for each Market Segment

Market Segment	Tool
Backbone	Basic retention principles
Foot Soldier	Common retention problems and solutions
Growth	Addresses retention problems driven by growth and change
Paramedic and ALS	Addresses retention of ALS providers and workforce utilization strategies

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- ### Workbook Design Process
- Identify Workbook Project Team
 - Targeted group of proven EMS leaders representative of market segment of tool.
 - Approve design statement and oversee tool development.
 - Select targeted end users to field test the tool and record feedback. Revisions to tool were made based on field test feedback.
 - Used Additional Focus Groups (if needed)
 - Partnered with VA Assoc. of Volunteer Rescue Squads (VAVRS), VAGEMSA and Regional EMS Councils for review and endorsement.

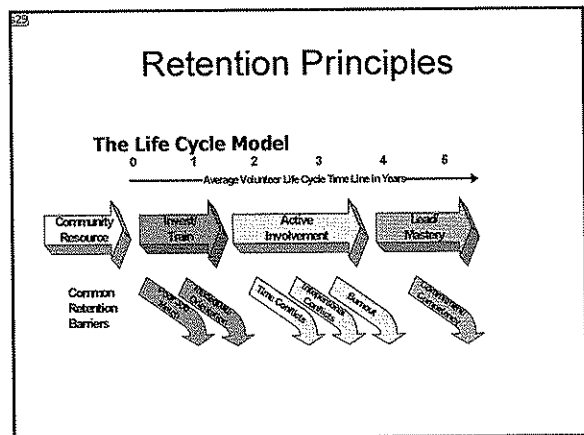


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- ### Retention Principles
- Focuses on four core retention principles.
- Life-cycle
 - Success
 - Belonging
 - Friends & Family

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Retention Principles

The Life Cycle Principle – EMS personnel will stay longer when leaders take specific actions at specific times in the retention life cycle.



Retention Principles

- **The Success Principle** – EMS personnel stay longer when they achieve success in important personal goals.
- **The Belonging Principle** - EMS personnel stay longer when they feel welcome, needed and respected.
- **The Friends and Family Principle** - EMS personnel stay longer when they develop strong personal relationships within their agency

The Belonging Principle

- What is the most important group you belong to?
- What are the top three reasons you stay in this group or organization?

Belonging Means Different Things to Different People

- Fran, the Nervous Newcomer
- John, the Newlywed
- The Average Joe
- Fred, the Burn Out Casualty

Fran, the Nervous Newcomer

- New member
- New to the community
- Unsure of herself
- Quiet During Meetings
- Does not hang out with others
- Does well on certification classes
- Responds "fine" when asked how she is doing
- Excited to go on calls

The Newlywed

- Member for three years
- Very active in organization
- A "go to" person when you want something done right the first time
- Recently married and starting a family
- Received a promotion and work is taking more time
- Not spending as much time with organization

Average Joe

- Been with organization for 5 years
- Long learning curve, but can do the job now
- Shows up for meetings and pulls duty shift
- Easy to take Joe for granted, reliable
- Haven't spent a lot of time with Joe
- "No respect"

Burnout Casualty

- Gung ho about everything he does
- Pulls own shift...plus additional shifts in a pinch
- Involved in several of the agency's projects
- Groomed to be an officer
- Commented about exhaustion and declining performance
- Other Signs
 - Chronic fatigue, short temper, cynicism, irritability, risk taking or risk aversion

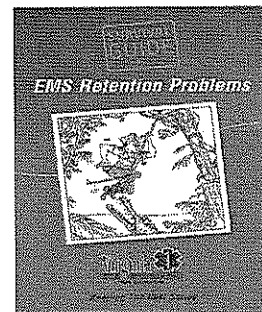
Success Principle

- What are the internal barriers to success that are driving good people away?
- Put the success principle in practice:
 - Find out what is bugging people.
 - Keep the give/get checkbook in balance.
 - Hook your members into lifelong learning.

Friends and Family Principle

- Practices related to the principle:
 - Till the Soil – create a fertile environment for retention
 - Plant the Seeds – bring in the good candidate
 - Fertilize and Water – provide support and encouragement
 - Get Rid of the Weeds – change or eliminate negative behavior

Survival Guide To EMS Retention Problems



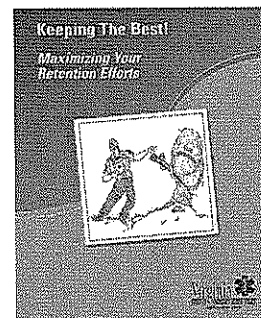
Survival Guide To EMS Retention Problems

"Quick read" for any market segment, features 13 common EMS retention problems and solutions.

Some of the problems and solutions include:

- Slackers and the Generation Gap
- Your Attitude Stinks
- Inter-squad War Games
- How to Burn Out Good People
- Are Your Leaders Ready to Lead?

Maximizing Your Retention Efforts





Maximizing Your Retention Efforts

Designed for the larger and more complex EMS agencies facing retention problems driven by growth and change.

Chapters include:

- The Crisis of Change
- Making the Marriage Work- Volunteer & Career
- The Recruiting Process
- The Retention Process
- Moving from Good Intentions to Results

Change Process

- Implementing Change Target Groups
 - Early Adapters – 20%
 - Fence Sitters – 50%
 - True Resisters – 30%
 - Does this reflect your agency
- Eight Steps to Implement Change and work from the resistance, compliance through the commitment stage.

Step #1 Be Clear About the Desired Outcomes

- Describe a major change that your organization will face in the near future in two or three sentences.
- What is the current situation and what is the desired outcome?

More Steps

- #2 – Assess the level of disruption
- #3 – Assess the consistency of the change with the current culture
- #4 – Analyze the risk associated with the change
- #5 – Assess readiness for change
- #6 – Change Implementation Resistance Phase

Final Steps

- #7 – Change Implementation Compliance Phase
- #8 – Change Implementation Commitment Phase

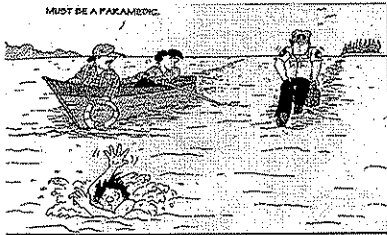
Keep the Recruitment Pipeline Full

- Three sources of potential membership
 - Advertising
 - Networking/Word of Mouth
 - Legacy/Family Member
- What sources do you use in your recruitment pipeline? How can you broaden your pipeline sources?

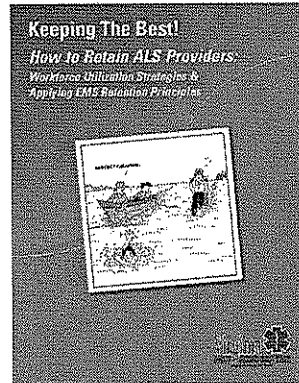
Core Retention Programs

- New Member Orientation & Training
- Membership Feedback
- EMS Agency Improvement
- Leadership Development
- Professional Development
- Relationship Building

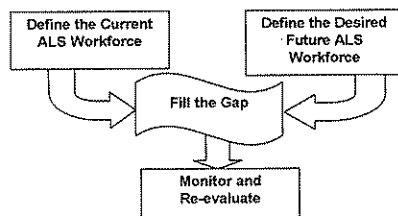
How to Retain ALS Providers:



Workforce Utilization Strategies & Applying EMS Retention Principles



Workforce Utilization Model



How to Retain ALS Providers

- Most analytical of the workbooks
- Through quantitative and qualitative analysis, seeks to first identify the brutal facts of the current work environment of ALS providers in an EMS agency.
- Through guided visioning helps the EMS leader define and quantify the desired ALS workforce in the next 2- 5 years.
- Leads the EMS agency leader through a process of filling the gap between the current and desired ALS workforce.

How to Retain ALS Providers

- ALS Retention program development to include identification of strategic initiatives with measurable goals, project team identification and project plans listing timelines, budgets and responsible parties for each initiative.
- Stresses the need to employ effective project and change management skills and to continually measure success and monitor the ALS Retention program.

Rolling Out the Retention Tool Kit

- Challenge is to entice EMS agency leaders to use the tools
- Instructor led workshops provide the opportunity to maximize shared learning
- Roll out during 2007-2009
 - Regular Classes
 - Train-The-Trainer Classes
- Need to give it legs before we can honestly and effectively evaluate

Retention Epidemic

- Create a buzz about the retention workforce workshops
- Empower our sales force of influential EMS leaders to show the importance of the soft skills
- Create a cultural shift by getting more EMS agencies to buy into the retention principles and other concepts

Response from the Field

- Positive based on anecdotal information, revived interest in retention efforts
- First and third workbook in second printing
- Regular program updates and information on OEMS Web site (<http://www.vdh.virginia.gov/oems> and click on Resources for Localities and EMS Officials)
- Requests from other states
- Encourage agencies to download from OEMS Web site

Evaluation

- It sounds great, but does it work?
- Need to get books and workshops in the field.
- What is a good measure of the effectiveness of the program?

Questions?

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