

Chapter 10

Performance Assessment

No guide to learning culture development would be complete without a chapter on assessing the performance of current training programs. In her book, *First Things Fast*, Allison Rossett explains in detail how easy and quick a performance analysis is for an organization. The key to understanding whether a fire department learning environment needs to change is to ask some very simple questions of those most affected. Basically, what is the current condition and what should the optimal condition be; what are the key areas of need, and what recommendations for a solution system are available. According to Rossett (1998), “performance analysis involves reaching out for several perspectives on a problem or opportunity, determining any and all drivers toward or barriers to successful performance, and proposing a solution system based on what is learned, not on what is typically done” (p. 13).

An example of one performance assessment I made in 2005, regarding how the PFA training division scheduled company training, is as follows: The current fire company training scheduling didn't directly take into account the needs of the battalion chiefs not having their monthly schedules changed by the training division. Informally, we tried not to adversely affect their schedules, but often times the possibility existed for the training division to unintentionally cause scheduling conflicts. The training officers would schedule multiple company training, or other events and publish this to the Intranet via email. Once it was published all affected could read what was dictated, and the officers and battalion chiefs had to work to adjust for conflicts that the training officers

missed. The training officers had no idea what had been already scheduled at the company or shift levels.

The optimal condition would allow the PFA training officers to develop training classes or events, and publish only to the battalion chiefs for their preliminary review and approval. Only after this approval could the monthly schedule for training events be published to all of PFA. This optimal condition data was obtained through direct interview with the three affected battalion chiefs, as qualitative data. (see [Appendix A](#))

The recommended solution system, initially, called for the training officers to publish proposed future training events to the battalion chiefs for their approval, sometimes many months in advance. This allowed for a very smooth scheduling process and problem solving collaboration. One added benefit of this performance analysis and solution system change was the added appreciation and cooperation towards the PFA training division staff for our consideration of their schedules and needs.

Clearly, this performance analysis didn't require a training needs assessment, since it only dealt with information dissemination. Other areas have dealt with much more complex subjects, which do require a full training needs assessment.

Fire service Learning-Cultures must be performance analysis driven, since this performance is the true test of whether students have taken ownership of and accountability for their own learning. If the current situations don't line up with the optimal, then assessments and adjustments may be needed. Without this performance analysis tool as a guiding Learning-Culture principle, the training programs themselves could become the targets for change. Likely, any adjustments needed should target the

instructors/facilitators and how they present the Learning Culture student/learner roles to their students.