

Managing a Water/Sewer System

Managing People

NMWWA

Staffing and Organization

- Employees are the key ingredient of your system
- Employees participate in the community daily
- Employees make numerous decisions daily

How your system selects, trains, and manages its employees is a critical aspect of your system's managerial capacity.

Staffing Assumptions

DECIDE IF THE ASSUMPTION IS CORRECT OR INCORRECT

1. Staff is usually the cause of system problems.
2. Costs of employee turnover and noncompliance far outweigh the financial costs of proper staffing.
3. Outside management is always a bad mistake.
4. Adequate training costs too much money.
5. Staffing depends on the the citizens willingness to pay higher fees for water/sewer service.
6. There is an optimal staffing level for certain size system.

System Staffing Levels Depend On:

- Age and complexity of the water/sewer system
- Maintenance needs
- Miles of lines
- Geological features
- Extent of automation and growth trends
- Use of outside services and planned construction projects

System Operator

The operator is key to fulfilling the mission of the community in delivering safe drinking water and treating wastewater

Issues

- Multiple full-time operators or back-up operators
- Part-time operators
- Training and certification(s) levels
- Work performance and attitude

System Operator (cont.)

Essential Operator Qualities

- Up-to-date certifications
- Knowledge of current drinking water standards
- Concern for providing safe water
- Personnel management skills
- Knowledge of entire water system

Office Staff

Office staff is main link with customers

Issues

- Range of responsibilities/potential conflicting duties
- Full time or part-time
- Multi-skill training
- Work performance and attitude
- Focus on customer service

Office Staff (cont.)

Office Staff Qualities

- Communication skills
- Knowledge of community
- Concerned
- Recordkeeping skills
- Organizational skills
- Aware of system

Internal Control

- Typically refers to financial management and the routine processes and procedures set up to avoid, prevent or detect errors in the billing and accounting system.
- Ways to improve Internal Control
 - Segregation of duties
 - External auditor
 - Smart work processes and procedures

Remember . . .

Stuff Happens !

Hiring Process

“80/20 Rule” applies

Two main goals in the hiring process:

1. Hire the person who best matches the job needs.
2. Follow all applicable discrimination laws.

Preparing to Hire

To ensure a fair process

- Document advertisements for position, procedures for accepting applications, screening candidate's qualifications
- Create and use a detailed job description of advertising, selection, and (later) evaluation
- Use contemporary application forms w/applicant certification of accuracy
- Create and use same interview process for all

List of
Overview
Questions



Job Description

Criteria for
Evaluating
Applicants

Topics to Cover During an Interview

- Certifications
- Training/education
- Past work experience
- Scenario regarding personnel management
- Emergency behavior examples
- Past experiences work with local officials

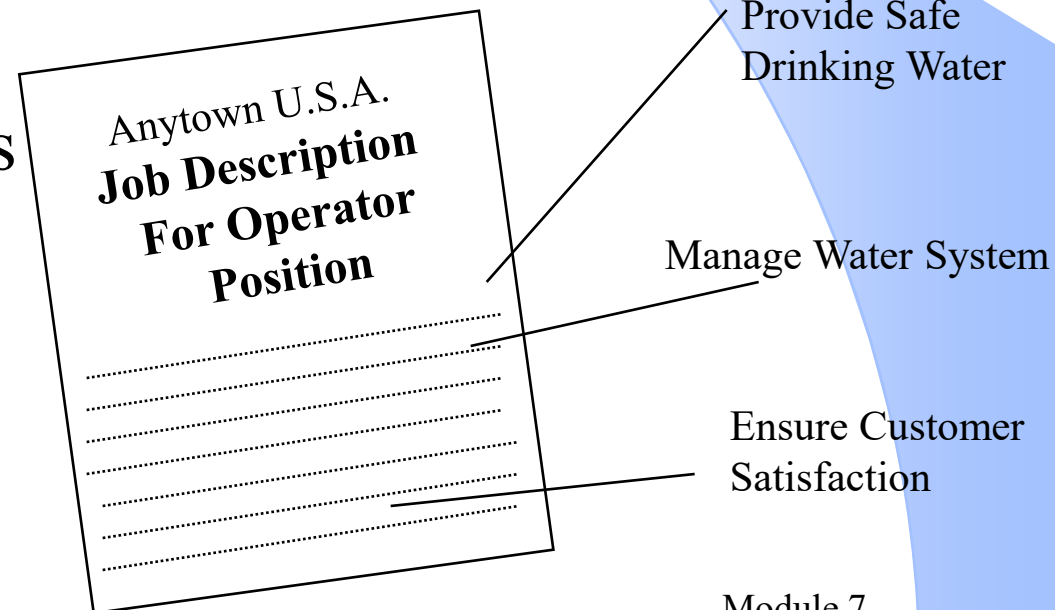
***Ensure fair interview, treatment, and consideration
for all applicants***

Evaluating and Selecting Applicants

- Determine evaluation process for selecting applicants
- Check all applicants' references
- Decide if you will test applicants and make sure all testing is legally defensible and follows accepted practices
- Consider using a probationary period

Staffing Issues Unique to Small Communities

- Multiple supervisors
- Micro-management
- Accurate information flow throughout organization
- Politics
- Detailed work policies
- Employee turnover
- *Other issues?*



Contemporary Employee Benefits

KNOW WHAT BENEFITS ARE NEGOTIABLE AND TO WHAT DEGREE

- Competitive salary
- Health insurance
- Flex-time
- 401k retirement plan
- On-site daycare services
- Periodic cash bonus
- Vacation
- Earned sick leave
- Personal days

Systems might be able to use benefit packages offered by the state, the municipal league, and various associations

Working with the Operator and Other Operations Staff

Promote safe working conditions

- Develop a written safety policy
- Ensure all employees are properly trained
- Provide a safe workplace
- Implement and enforce all safety policies
- Investigate all accidents and injuries to determine cause and take corrective actions
- Ensure proper maintenance of equipment and tools

Operator Training

- A well trained, knowledgeable operator protects the public health and the public's investment in the water system.
- Know the benefits of operator training and provide the necessary support and funding.

Desirable Operator Reporting Information

- Total number of customers
- Number of new customers
- Total water produced
- Total water billed
- Percent of unaccounted-for water
- Revenue and expenses for period
- Revenue and budget comparisons

- Explain budget overruns
- Number of meter re-reads
- Number and types of complaints
- Number of terminations
- Aged accounts receivable
- Significant drops in water pressure
- Operating emergencies

FREQUENCY OF REPORTING TO BE DETERMINED

Operator Recognition

**Certificate of
Recognition**

presented to
Operator
Anytown U.S.A.
for
**Hard Work
and Service**

Working with Employees: The Essentials

- Connect job descriptions to actual tasks and job performance assessments
- Keep all procedures (hiring, performance assessment, disciplining, etc). consistent across the entire system
- Adopt an assessment procedure that involves the employee from the beginning

Management Training and Skills

**MANAGEMENT TRAINING SHOULD BE AVAILABLE
TO ALL EMPLOYEES, ESPECIALLY OFFICIALS,
BOARD MEMBERS, AND OWNERS.**

- **Leadership Skills**
 - Feedback
 - Coaching
- **Communication Skills**
 - Person-to-person
 - Group communication
 - Written communication

Management Training and Skills (Cont.)

- **Self-Management Skills**
 - Priority setting
 - Delegating
 - Time management
 - Managing by standards
 - Self-development

Important Employee Issues

- Sexual Harassment
 - Deal with it in advance
 - Respond to all complaints immediately
 - Document, document, document
 - Talk to an attorney if possible
- Family Care & Medical Leave Act
 - Eligibility: 50+ employees, one year tenure, up to 12 weeks (not required to pay)
- American Disabilities Act
 - Eligibility: 15+ employees (maybe less), provide reasonable accommodations

Summary

- Staffing and organization assumptions
- System staffing levels
- Role of the operator, office staff
- Internal controls
- Hiring procedures
- Staffing issues unique to small communities
- Working with operators and operation staff
- Essentials of working with employees
- Management training and skills
- Important employee issues